

## Facility Assessment and Recommendations

As part of the comprehensive parks and recreation master plan project, individual site-based assessments and inventories were conducted on existing parks and recreation facilities in the county, including the facilities within the jurisdictions of the towns in Pender County. These facilities were examined for facility diversity, distribution patterns, maintenance practices, age, condition, and compliance with the accessibility requirements of the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Following the assessments, recommendations were made based on the standards set forth by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines, as well as the input received from the public at the open meetings and through the survey.

### NRPA Guidelines

Minimum standards for parks and recreation facilities in communities are often assessed using the guidelines set out in the 1995 book *Park, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines* by James D. Mertes, Ph.D, CLP, and James R. Hall, CLP or from the 1990 book *Recreation, Park, and Open Space Standards and Guidelines* by Roger A. Lancaster. These books, published by the NRPA, outline typical park classifications, the amount of acreage a system should have, and service levels that are recommended based on population of a community. Guidelines such as those highlighted in the books have historically been used to assess a community's parks and recreation needs; however, since the mid-1990's, the practice has shifted to assessing the park and recreation needs of the residents through surveying public input. This shift in practice is a result of the realization that local trends and demographics generally dictate the need for particular facilities in a community.

*Park, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines* suggests that a minimum of 6.25 to 10 acres of developed open space per 1000 residents should serve as the central system of park lands. These types of parks can be classified as mini parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks, special-use parks, and greenways. Table 6.1 provides a matrix of these parks classifications, but following is a description of each:

#### Mini Park

Mini parks, also called "pocket parks," are the smallest types of parks, typically no more than five acres. Mini parks are designed to attract residents who live within a quarter mile of the park. Park users typically walk to or bike to the park, and no parking facilities for motor vehicles are typically incorporated into the park. Mini parks' are typically passive, limited activity park facilities due to their size, and serve generally .25 to .5 acres per thousand residents. Common park features include playgrounds, benches, and picnic tables set within an attractive landscape, sometimes designed to enhance and preserve the surrounding area. Mini parks are not designed to include fields for league play or large community events.

#### Neighborhood Park

Commonly found in most county and municipal park systems, neighborhood parks are typically 5 to 20 acres in size and serve residents living within ½ mile of the park. Neighborhood parks typically maximize recreational activities and facilities within their limited size, and commonly include features such as playgrounds, shelters, walking paths, playing fields, parking facilities, and restroom and concession facilities. Parking standard for neighborhood parks is typically a minimum of seven spaces for the first ten acres, and one additional space for each additional acre. These standards may vary based on the types of activities or facilities incorporated into the park. Neighborhood parks typically serve between 10,000 and 20,000 residents, or one to two acres per thousand people.

#### Community Park

Community parks are large parks generally ranging from 20 to 75 acres in size, with a service area anywhere from 50,000 to 80,000 people, or 5 to 8 acres per 1,000 people. These parks are designed to address all users' recreation needs and interests, including both day and night activities. Large indoor fitness/recreation centers, multi-field sports complexes, and other large-scale facilities are common within community parks.

#### Regional Park

Regional parks are the largest park type found within a park system. These parks range in size from 50 to 250 acres depending on the types of activities offered and the degree of use of the facilities. Regional parks are designed to service residents within one hour of driving time from the park. Regional parks are generally designed in a manner that

they are accessible by hiking and biking trails, as well as motorized vehicles. Because of the size of these parks, it is common for regional parks to have unique recreation areas within the park facility, such as an aquatic facility in addition to natural areas.

**Table 6.1: Recommended Classification System for Recreational Open Space**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Use</b>	<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Desirable Size</b>	<b>Acres per 1,000 Population</b>	<b>Desirable Site Characteristics</b>
<b>Mini-Park</b>	Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens.	0.75 mile radius	5 acres or less	0.25 to 0.5 acres	Within neighborhoods and in close proximity to apartment complexes, townhouse developments, and housing for the elderly.
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>	Area for intense recreational activities, such as field games, court games, crafts, playground apparatus area, skating, picnicking, wading pools, etc.	0.75 to 0.5 mile radius	5-20 acres	1 to 2 acres	Suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhood population and geographically centered with safe walking and bike access. May be developed as a school park facility.
<b>Community Park</b>	Area of diverse environmental quality. May include areas suited for intense recreational activities, such as athletic complexes and large swimming pools. May be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation, such as walking, viewing, sitting, and picnicking. May be any combination of the above, depending upon site suitability and community need.	1 to 2 mile radius	20-75 acres	5 to 8 acres	May include natural features such as water bodies and areas suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhood served.
<b>Regional Park</b>	Area of natural or ornamental quality for outdoor recreation such as picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping, and trail uses; may include play areas.	1 hour driving time	50-250 acres	5 to 10 acres	Contiguous to or encompassing natural resources.

Component	Use	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres per 1,000 Population	Desirable Site Characteristics
<b>Special Use Park</b>	Areas for specialized or single purpose recreational activities such as golf courses, nature centers, zoos, conservatories, or areas that preserve, maintain, and interpret buildings, sites, and objects of archaeological significance. Also plazas or squares in or near commercial centers, boulevards, and parkways.	No Application Standard	Variable depending on desired size	Variable	Within communities.
<b>Natural Resource Area/Preserve</b>	Protection and management of the natural/cultural environment with recreation use as a secondary objective.	No Application Standard	Sufficient to protect the resource	Variable	Variable, depending on the resource being protected.
<b>Greenway</b>	Area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel such as bicycling, walking, and hiking. May include active play areas.	No Application Standard	Sufficient width to protect the resource and provide maximum use.	Variable	Built or natural corridors, such as utility rights-of-way, bluff lines, vegetation patters, roads, and existing and abandoned rail corridors that link other components of the recreation system or community facilities such as schools, libraries, commercial areas, and other park areas.
Sources: Lancaster, 1990 Recreation, Park, and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, Page 56 and Mertes Ph.D., CLP, James D. and James R. Hall, CLP; Park, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines					

### Special-Use Park

Special-use parks such as a golf course or a museum are tailored to satisfy the needs of a particular user group. Typically, these types of facilities are considered good sources of revenue from user fees, as long as the facility is properly maintained and staffed. Special-use parks vary in size depending on its focus and the community's demand for the activity.

### Natural Resource Area/Preserve

Natural resource areas are lands acquired for the preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, buffers, and visual aesthetics. These lands may include protected land such as wetlands or shorelines along surface waters, or lands that are not suitable for development such as seasonal flood plains or former landfills but offer

significant natural resources. Natural resource areas and preserves are important because they may maintain the natural amenities of the area and contribute to the open space acreage in a community.

### Greenways

Greenways can be described as paths or networks of trails designed for non-motorized transportation. Greenways serve many benefits, and are becoming popular tools to link communities, schools, shopping centers, and even cities and counties. Greenways offer health benefits to the community by providing safe and convenient places for residents to walk, jog, or bicycle. Increased tourism usually occurs as a result of greenway development, and subsequently serves as an economic driver to communities. Greenways serve as a resource for environmental protection and educational opportunities as well.

Greenways are typically 10 to 12 feet wide, and may be constructed of a paved or natural surface. Rail-trails are a specific type of greenway that is developed along an abandoned rail corridor. Greenways should be developed in a manner that provide convenient areas for users to access the facility, as well as provide connections to ecological, cultural, and recreational elements in a community.

### School Park

By locating new parks facilities on existing and planned school sites, the county may utilize new and existing resources and provide concentrated facilities that serve the community. The type of school, such as elementary, middle, or high school, generally will have an effect on the amount of adjacent land available for park development. Middle and high schools typically are developed with athletic fields to support team sports, while playground and multi-use fields are more common at elementary schools. It is recommended that parks and recreation staff work closely with school system staffs to determine suitable existing and future school sites that are compatible for parks and recreation development and use.

### Private Park/Recreation Facility

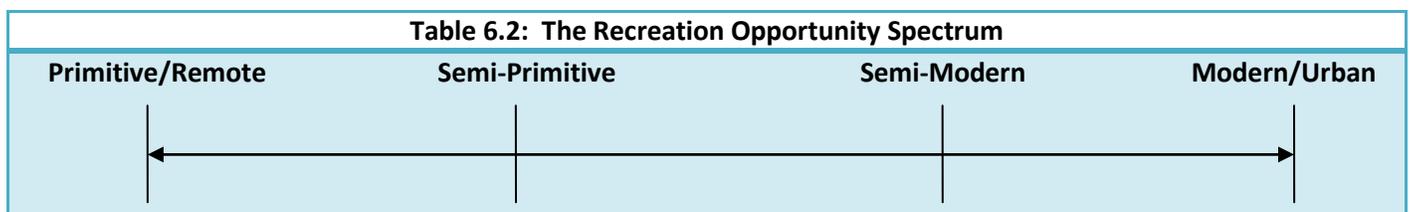
According to the NRPA, private park and recreation facilities are developed generally in a residential area for the exclusive use of residents and are usually maintained through a neighborhood association. For-profit establishments such as golf courses and amusement parks may also be classified as private parks and recreation facilities.

Private park and recreation facilities may either be entirely privately-owned, or be a joint venture between a private organization and a public entity. Utilizing these types of partnerships is a method to create programs and facilities at a reduced cost to the public sector.

### Diversity of Public Recreation Opportunities

The outdoor environment offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities, from county parks to pristine wilderness. The public’s recreational interests and needs are equally diverse; community residents expect recreational opportunities and facilities to satisfy their particular interest, challenge their abilities, and meet their expectations of a particular activity and setting. The relationship between expectations and actual settings has been long recognized by recreation researchers, and it is expected that a range of opportunities be offered within a parks system to best serve the diversity of public expectations.

The US Department of Agriculture Forest Service developed a useful tool for assessing, planning, and managing recreation resources by creating the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) in accordance with the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974. The core principle of the ROS was that quality in recreation is best assured by providing a diverse set of recreational opportunities within a parks system.



The ROS categorizes recreation settings on a continuum ranging from primitive/remote to modern/urban, as depicted in Table 6.2 above. Each position along the spectrum represents distinctive recreational opportunities, and Table 6.3 below describes the settings and experiences appropriate for each end of the spectrum.

<b>Table 6.3: The Outdoor Recreational Activities Spectrum</b>		
	<b>Modern/Urban</b>	<b>Primitive/Remote</b>
<b>Settings</b>		
<b>Proximity</b>	Close to home	Far from home
<b>Size</b>	Less than 100 acres	Several thousand acres
<b>Facilities</b>	Extensive facilities	Limited or no facilities
<b>Natural Resources</b>	Man-made environment dominates; natural resources secondary	Natural environment dominant; little or no development
<b>Activities</b>	Facility dependent	Natural resource dependent
<b>Experiences</b>		
<b>Leisure Time</b>	Participation in short time periods possible	Substantial blocks of time required for participation
<b>Management Controls</b>	Regimentation and controls obvious and numerous	On-site regimentation low, with controls primarily off-site
<b>Social Interaction</b>	Large numbers of users on-site and in nearby areas	Few people encountered per day
<b>Character of Experience</b>	Opportunities for competitive and spectator sports and for passive uses of highly developed parks are common; experiencing natural environment-related challenges and risks and using outdoor skills are relatively unimportant; contact with other people is prevalent, as is convenience of sites and opportunities.	High probability of experiencing isolation from sights and sounds of humans; independence; closeness to nature; tranquility and self-reliance through the application of primitive outdoor skills in an environment that offers challenge and risk.
<i>Source: 2008-2013 NC SCORP, NC Dept. of Parks and Recreation</i>		

It is important that Pender County provide a wide range of settings within the parks and recreation system in order to ensure that the needs of the broadest segment of the population are met. As such, the recommendations made for facility development and renovations in this plan account for providing a variety of settings.

### **Individual Parks and Recreation Facility Assessments**

An important component of a parks and recreation master plan is a full evaluation of the parks and recreation facilities that exist in Pender County. For this section, all facilities within the county were assessed, including facilities that are operated or managed by the county, municipalities, and state and federal agencies, as well as private recreation opportunities. Recommendations were made only on the Pender County managed and partnered facilities. *Facility Matrix 1* in the *Appendix* contains a complete inventory of public parks and recreation facilities in Pender County.

## Pender County Facilities

Pender County is responsible for two existing parks, and will soon be opening a third county park. Both Hampstead Kiwanis Park and Pender Memorial Park were developed and are operated with assistance from partners; Millers Pond Park will be Pender County's first exclusively county developed and operated facility.

### *Pender Memorial Park*

Located along near South Smith and West Hayes Streets in the Town of Burgaw, Pender Memorial Park was first developed for use as the fairgrounds for the area, and then as the site of the athletic fields for the former Burgaw High School (now Burgaw Middle School). In the 1970s, Burgaw Dixie Youth leased the land from the county and developed an athletic complex to support their baseball games. Five fields were eventually built, and the complex was operated and managed by Burgaw Dixie Youth until the early 2000s. At that time, Pender County began performing a more active role in the operations and maintenance of the complex, including taking over the some of the operating and utility costs.

In 2006, the county was awarded a \$280,000 PARTF grant that was utilized to develop two additional youth baseball/softball fields, three multi-purpose soccer/football fields, a new concession stand, a playground, parking lot, and various other improvements. During the same period, Burgaw Dixie Youth supported a variety of improvements, including the replacement of the aged concession stand and restroom building, fencing, irrigation, and other improvements and renovations.

Pender Memorial Park consists of three parcels totaling 25.75 acres. Along South Smith Street, a 13-acre county-owned parcel hosts the older section of the park, consisting of three baseball/softball fields, three batting cages, a restroom and concession building, parking areas, a picnic shelter, and ingress/egress drives. The adjacent 2.25-acre parcel is leased by Burgaw Dixie Youth from a private owner and hosts two youth baseball/softball fields. Finally, the county-owned 10.5-acre parcel along West Hayes Street was the tract to receive the recent development leveraged by the PARTF grant described above.

While the recent improvements have added to the attractiveness and diversity of Pender Memorial Park, Planning Staff noticed several issues during the field visit. Primarily, the development of the new phase of the park has created some issues with interconnectivity for pedestrians, and particularly for persons with disabilities. Also, there are plenty of opportunities for landscaping improvements



***Image 6.1: The new concession stand/restroom building stands proud as a testament to the commitment of Burgaw Dixie Youth to Pender Memorial Park.***



***Image 6.2: Landscaping and driveway improvements within Pender Memorial Park would not only make the park more visually appealing, but also provide needed shady areas for visitors to enjoy.***

within the park; such improvements would provide a more aesthetically appealing facility, as well as provide shaded areas for visitors to enjoy. Finally, there is a disconnected storm drain pipe along the driveway to the batting cages that is causing accelerated erosion of the road surface; the disconnected pipe should be repaired before the erosion leads significant damage or safety issues. Additionally, the park may benefit from the placement of more trash receptacles around the park; many studies have shown that increasing the number of trash cans in public areas decreases the amount of litter accumulation.

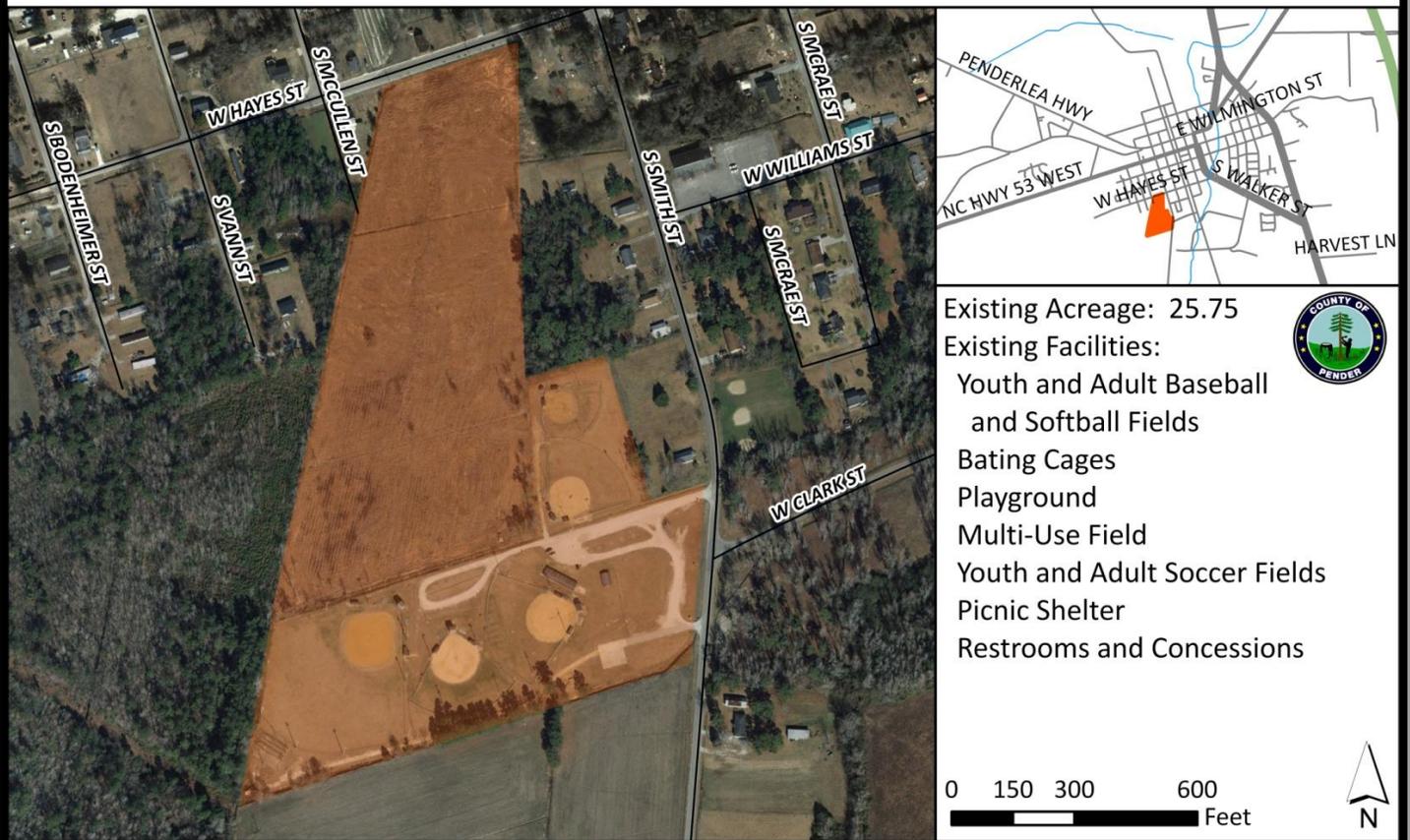
This park is maintained by both Pender County and Burgaw Dixie Youth. Pender County maintenance workers perform the landscape maintenance, while Burgaw Dixie Youth maintains the athletic fields and facilities; this management technique appears to be working effectively, but both parties recognize that park enhancements would create an improved facility.



**Image 6.3: New playground equipment along with youth soccer/football fields has helped diversify the recreational opportunities at Pender Memorial Park.**

Pender Memorial Park offers limited recreational opportunities to area residents, made possible in part by the proud volunteers and supporters of Burgaw Dixie Youth. Pender County should continue to focus on improving the park to meet the recreational needs in the area, as further discussed later in this section.

**Figure 6.1: Pender Memorial Park**



### *Hampstead Kiwanis Park*

In 2002, over 82 acres of property along Sloop Point Loop Road in Hampstead were donated to the Hampstead Kiwanis Club by the Tommie Little and Bill Clark Families for the creation of a park to serve the greater Hampstead community. Since then, Hampstead Kiwanis and Pender County have worked together to develop and maintain the park, leveraging grant money, donations, and appropriations from the general fund to create a well-used and appreciated recreation facility in eastern Pender County.

In 2004, Pender County received \$250,000 from the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) that was combined with \$150,000 from the county and significant private donations for the development of Phase I of the park. This first phase included a baseball field, a multi-purpose field, restrooms, concession stand, a playground, picnic shelter, and grading and irrigation work. After a groundbreaking ceremony in late August 2004, an army of volunteers as well as paid contractors commenced work on Phase I development.



***Image 6.4: Hampstead Kiwanis Park was made possible through a unique and mutually-beneficial partnership between the Hampstead Kiwanis Club and Pender County.***

Two years later, work commenced on Phase II of the park, made possible in part by another PARTF grant for \$395,000, as well as through private donations and volunteers. Ingress and egress improvements coincided with the Phase II improvements, including turning lanes on Sloop Point Loop Road which allowed for safe motor vehicle access into the park. Like the earlier phase, matching for the PARTF grant came by way of land donation from Hampstead Kiwanis to Pender County; land may be utilized for the required matching funds for PARTF projects. Phase II development was being completed during the creation of this plan, and includes two additional youth baseball/softball fields, one multi-purpose field, a paved walking trail, and an additional parking lot, among other improvements.

Hampstead Kiwanis Park is maintained by the Pender County Public Works maintenance workers, who take much pride in the appearance of Hampstead Kiwanis Park and the other facilities they maintain. The Hampstead Kiwanis Park, Inc. President indicated to Planning Staff during an interview how pleased he and the other Board members were with the maintenance and upkeep of the park, but also cautioned that as the responsibilities of the maintenance workers increase with the addition of new county-managed parks and recreation facilities, adequate staff will be necessary to accommodate the additional labor hours. Related to park and field maintenance, the lack of adequate practice fields at the schools in the Hampstead area is creating field maintenance difficulties for the Hampstead Kiwanis Park. Between the use by school teams and private recreation organizations, several of the fields within the park are overused to the point that maintenance issues have arisen. The development of additional fields not only within the park but also at the schools would alleviate the overuse.



***Image 6.5: The concessions/restroom building and playground were part of the amenities developed for Phase I with a grant from the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.***

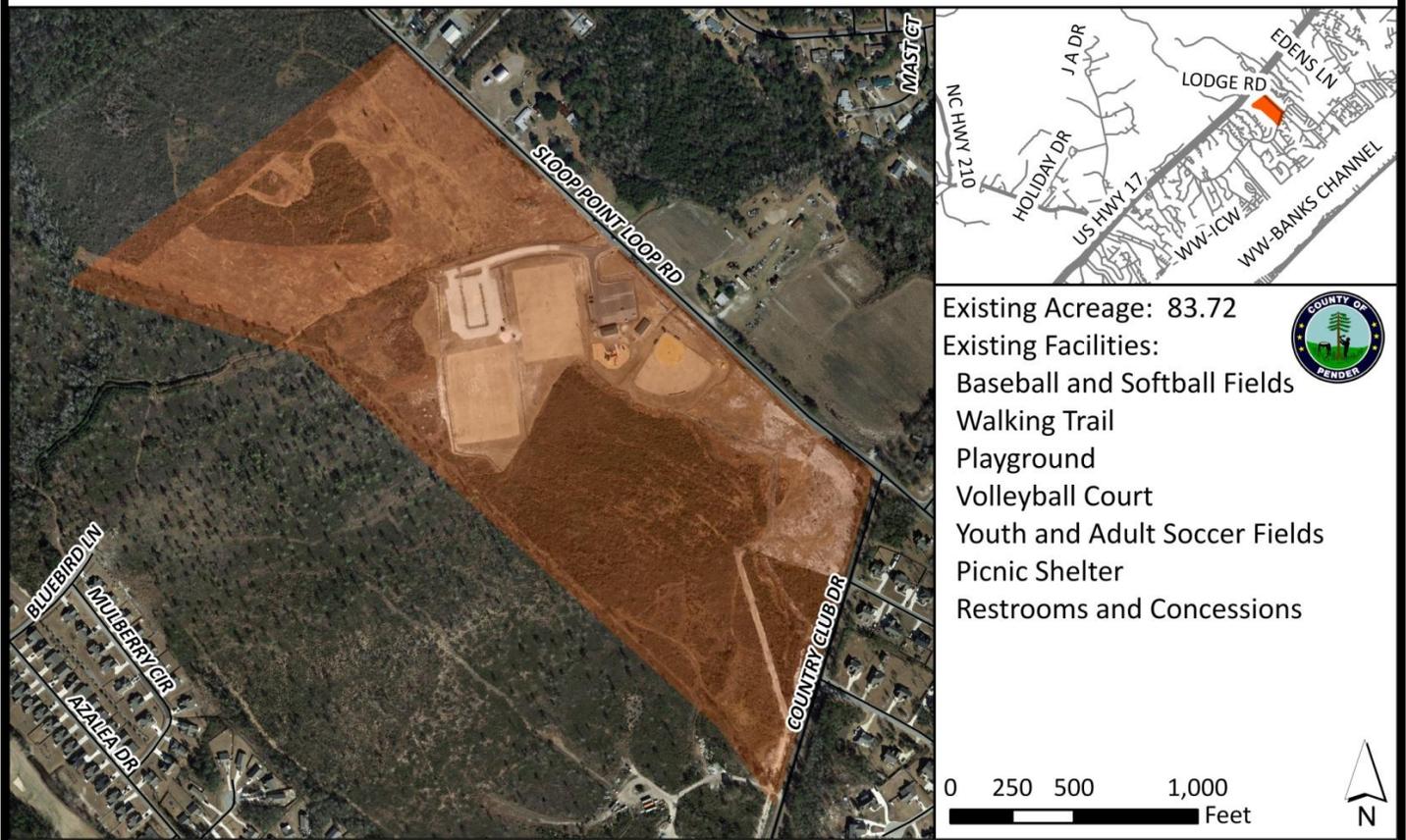
The park is utilized by a variety of residents and visitors, as well as numerous special interest organizations. The coordination of the use of the amenities within the park has proved difficult at times, and the implementation of an online registration system would help to alleviate scheduling conflicts and overbooking. Additionally, conflicting use of park amenities has been a noted safety concern that could easily be resolved by developing and utilizing a more coordinated scheduling of park amenity use as well as the development of additional park amenities.

While a master plan has been created for the overall concept of Hampstead Kiwanis Park, it is recommended that the master plan be updated to reflect the current park and recreation needs in the Hampstead community. More on the recommendations for Hampstead Kiwanis Park may be found later in this section.



**Image 6.6: Hampstead Kiwanis Park features a large picnic shelter that may be reserved for birthday parties, group picnics, and other special events.**

**Figure 6.2: Hampstead Kiwanis Park**



### Millers Pond Park

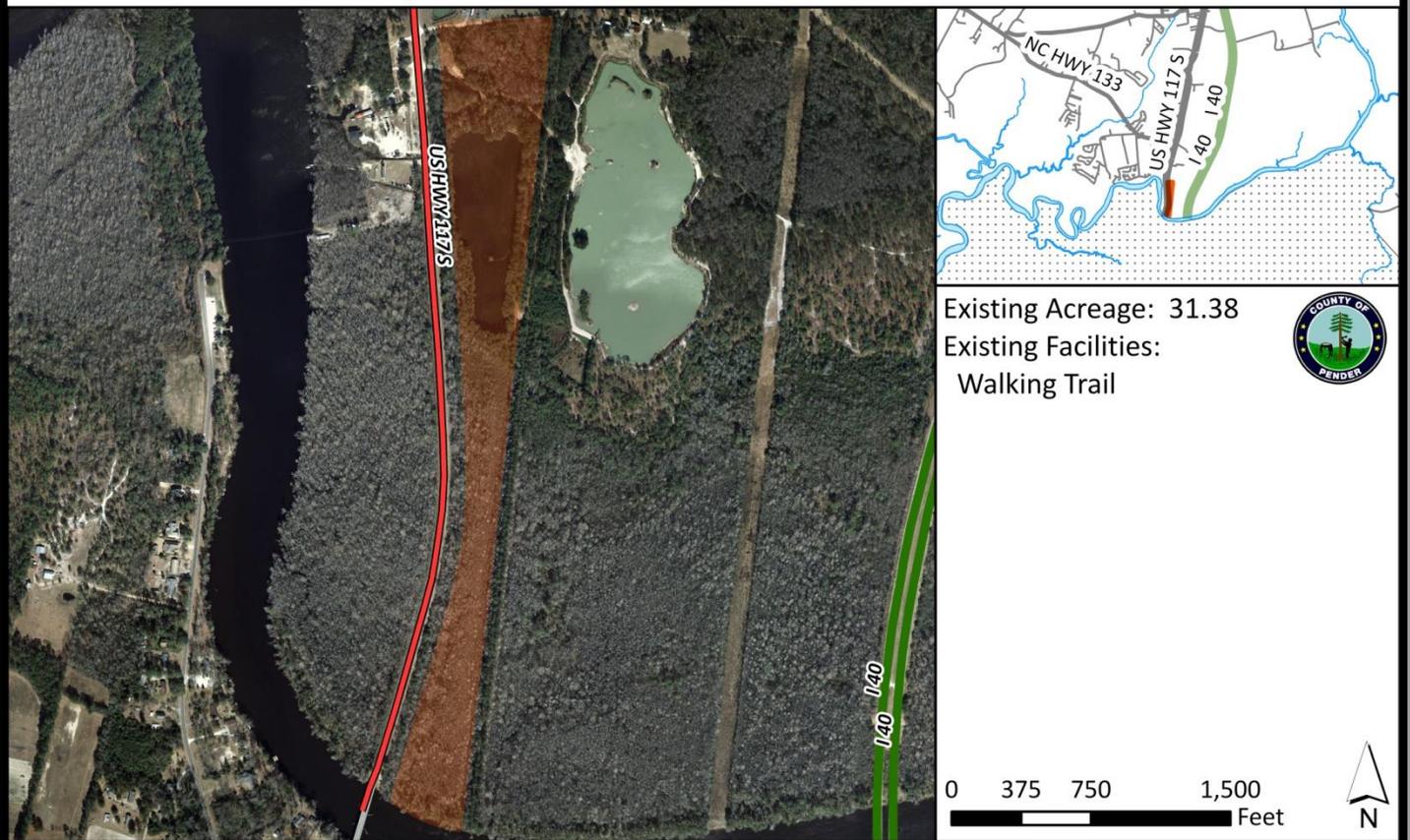
Although still under development at the time of publication of this parks and recreation plan, the Millers Pond Park is included in this assessment as an existing facility. Millers Pond Park is situated between US Highway 117, the railbanked rail corridor, and the Northeast Cape Fear River. The 31.38-acre site was used by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) as a source of fill dirt for a transportation improvement project, and the mining of fill resulted in the seven acre freshwater pond that now adorns the property. NCDOT eventually sold the property to Pender County, and the site will be the next park facility opened by Pender County.

Phase I of Millers Pond Park schedule to open in 2010 as a passive recreation area and will initially have limited facilities including a parking area, 0.53-mile long nature trail, a pond overlook, as well as bench seating and informational kiosks. Future phase designs are pending review of the wetlands delineation; additional amenities may include picnic shelters, a canoe and small boat launch area, an ADA-accessible overlook, a nature and education center, and restroom facilities.



**Image 6.7: Millers Pond Park was under development during the creation of this plan, and will be opened as a nature-oriented passive recreation park.**

**Figure 6.3: Millers Pond Park**



## Municipal Facilities

During the facilities assessment for this plan, Planning Staff also examined the parks facilities in the six municipalities within Pender County. The only town in Pender County with a dedicated parks and recreation department is the Town of Surf City, which offers several parks with various amenities and some recreational programming opportunities. While the other five municipalities in Pender County do not have dedicated parks and recreation departments, some of the localities still offer recreational facilities.

### Town of Surf City

The Surf City Department of Parks and Recreation operates three impressive parks as well as a community center, which is utilized to host a variety of special events and wellness programs. The programs and events held at the community center in Surf City are a great example of revenue-generating opportunities that Pender County Parks and Recreation is currently lacking. These events and programs are available to residents for a nominal user fee, which helps to increase the economic sustainability of the department.

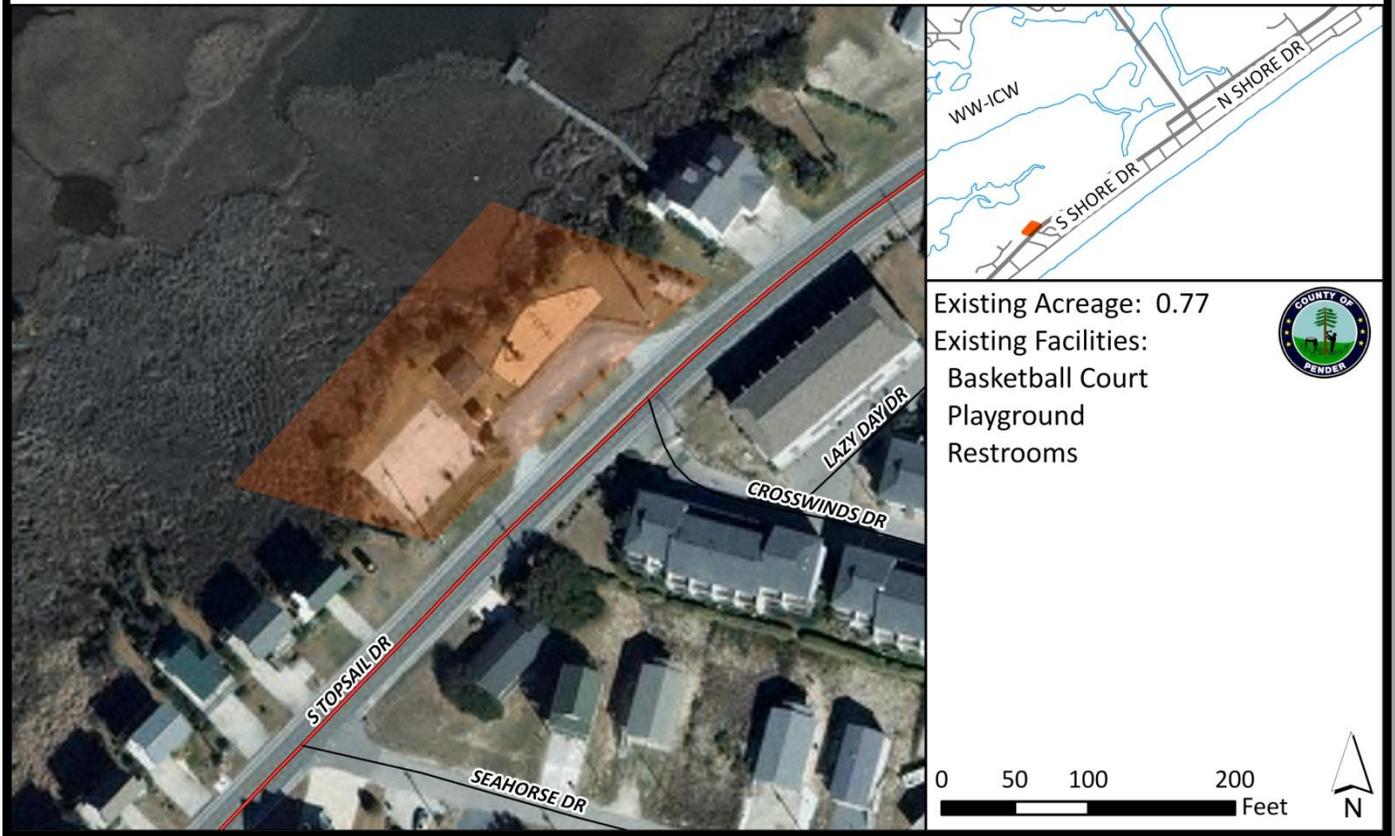
Soundside Park, shown in Figure 6.4, also hosts a public water access managed by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. At the time of publication of this plan, the public water access in Soundside Park provided the only public access to the Intracoastal Waterway, as the access on Lewis Road was still in the planning stages. More on public water access areas may be found later in this section.

Surf City also has some acreage devoted for conservation. These include an 8.5-acre parcel behind Family Park identified as Pender County PIN 4234-57-1254-0000 that is not depicted on Figure 6.5. Additionally, the town owns an 11.9-acre parcel (PIN 4245-12-5810-0000) reserved for conservation area; this parcel was donated to the town by a developer several years ago.

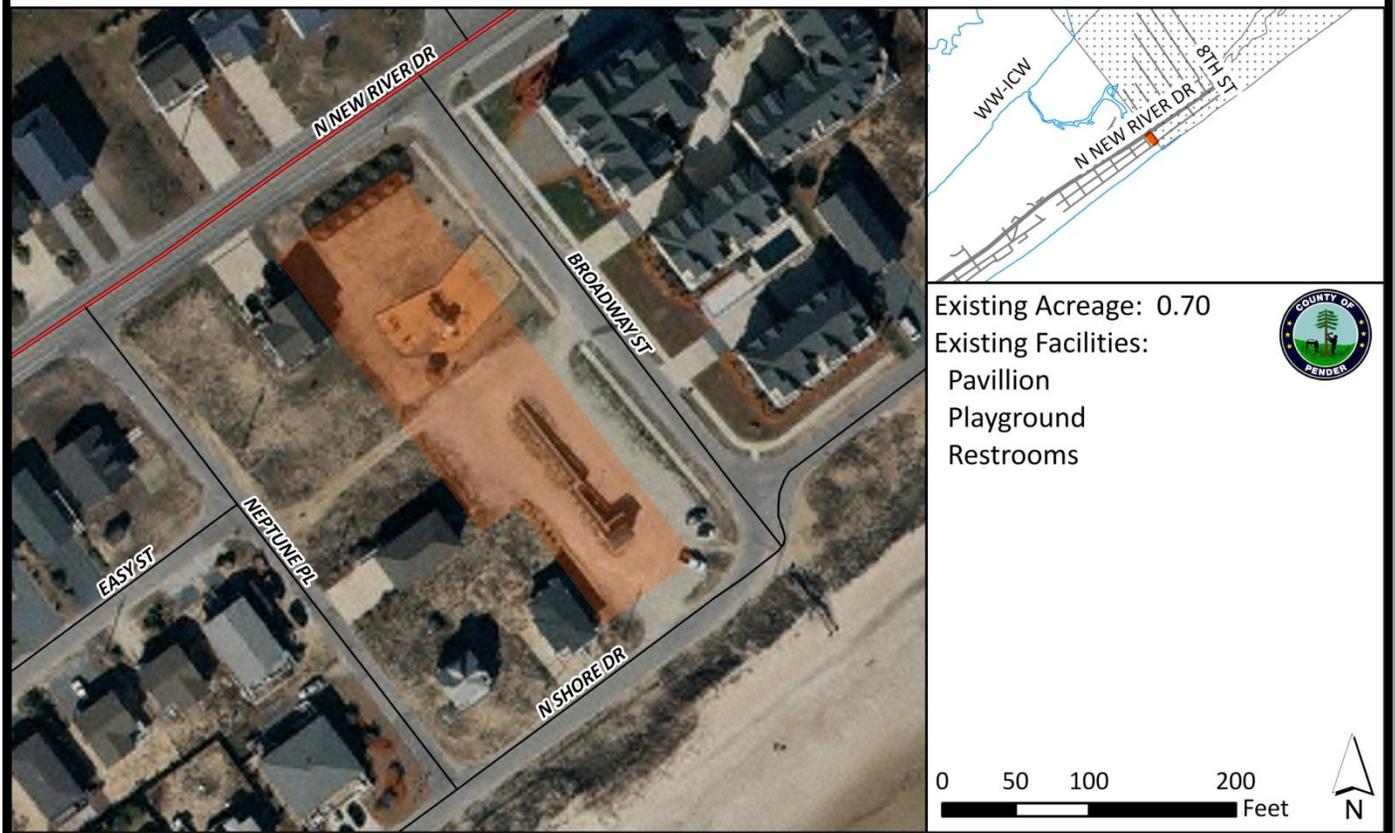
**Figure 6.4: Soundside Park (Town of Surf City)**



**Figure 6.5: Family Park (Town of Surf City)**

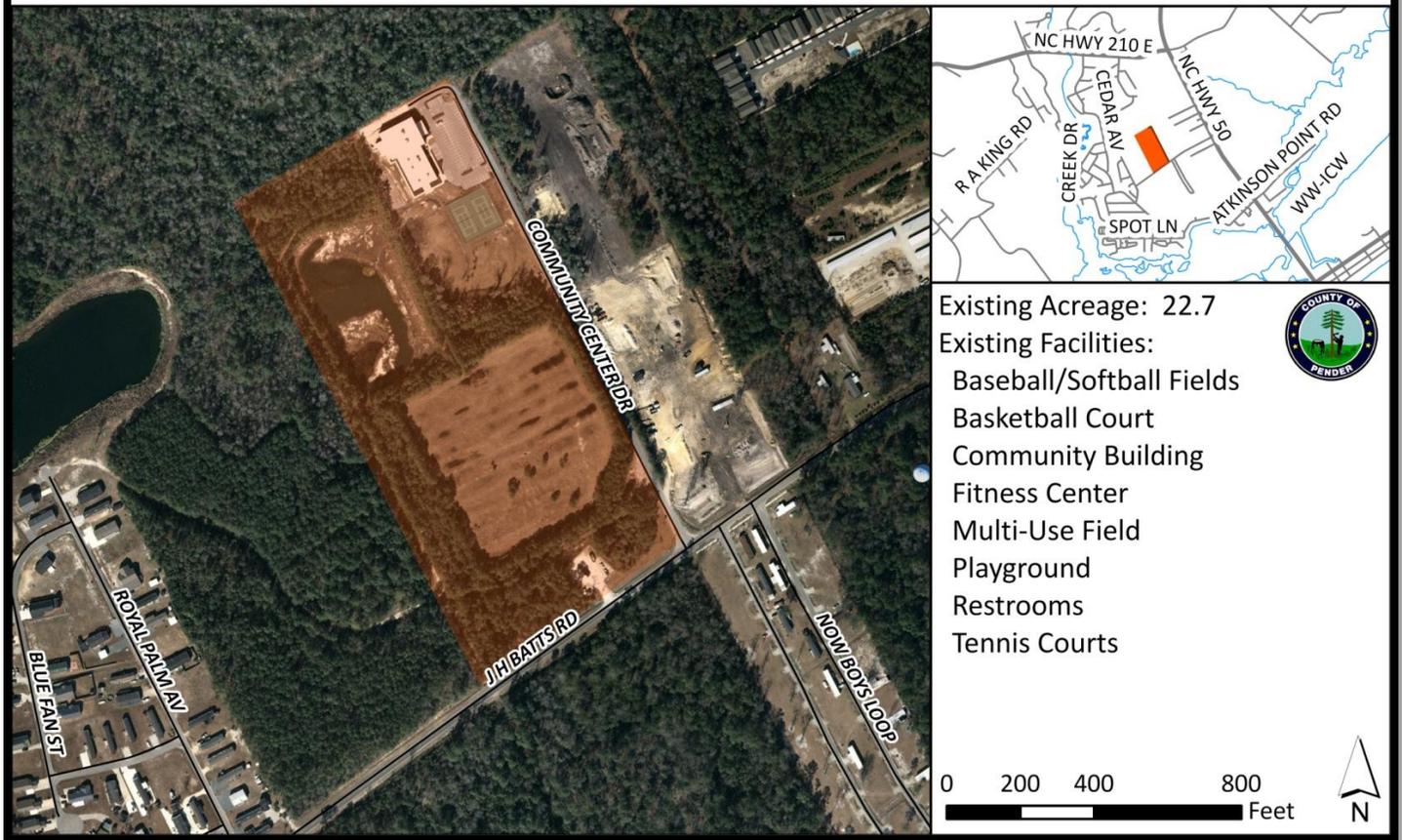


**Figure 6.6: Albury Recreation Area (Town of Surf City)**



According to the *Town of Surf City Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan* completed in 2007, the town has several parks and recreational facilities projects prioritized, including the Community Center Recreation Fields and Nature Trail, as well as the Progress Energy Transmission Line Easement Greenway. Surf City's Community Center is situated on a 22 acre parcel, of which contains 8 acres of capped landfill that was properly closed in the 1980s. These 8 acres are not suitable for development of any major structures, and therefore two youth baseball/softball fields and a soccer/football field is planned for the site, along with additional walking/biking trails around the facility.

**Figure 6.7: Surf City Community Center (Town of Surf City)**



Surf City has identified the existing 100-foot Progress Energy Transmission Line Easement as suitable and feasible for development of an earthen or gravel nature trail or paved multi-purpose path. The transmission line easement runs from Jacksonville to Castle Hayne; Progress Energy's easement restricts the development of anything that would prevent access to the servicing of the transmission lines and structures in the easement. A greenway along this easement would serve a crucial connection between the preferred alternative identified in the *Bicycle Facilities Study for the Blue Clay Corridor*, prepared in March 2008 for the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization. As identified in the study, the preferred alternative for Blue Clay Corridor bicycle facility will terminate on Holly Shelter Road, and the project identified in this plan as the Coastal Pender Greenway will provide the link between bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the City of Wilmington and New Hanover County and the facilities planned in the Town of Surf City.

As the Town of Surf City continues to grow, Pender County should explore and facilitate a relationship with the town's planning and parks and recreation staff for the coordination and partnering support for new facility and program development, and to avoid duplication of efforts.

### Town of Topsail Beach

The Town of Topsail Beach operates a public marina that includes eight wet slips available for rent, and a boating access ramp. These facilities require user fees; a wet slip may be rented for the rate of \$25 per night, \$150 per week, or \$295 per month, and the cost to use the boat ramp is \$10 per day, with seasonal rates available. The marina is staffed during the summer months, and remains open yet unstaffed other times, including at night.

Topsail Beach also hosts several neighborhood and local beach access points within the town's jurisdiction. Additionally, the town offers a wheelchair that can be used on the beach by persons with disabilities that impede their ability to walk on the sand. The wheelchair is available free of charge on a first-come, first-serve basis by contacting the town's police department, and may only be used within the town's limits.

At the time of publication of this document, Topsail Beach did not have any additional parks and recreation facilities existing or planned.



**Image 6.8: The Town of Topsail Beach offers a wheelchair to persons with disabilities for use on the beach within the town's limits.**

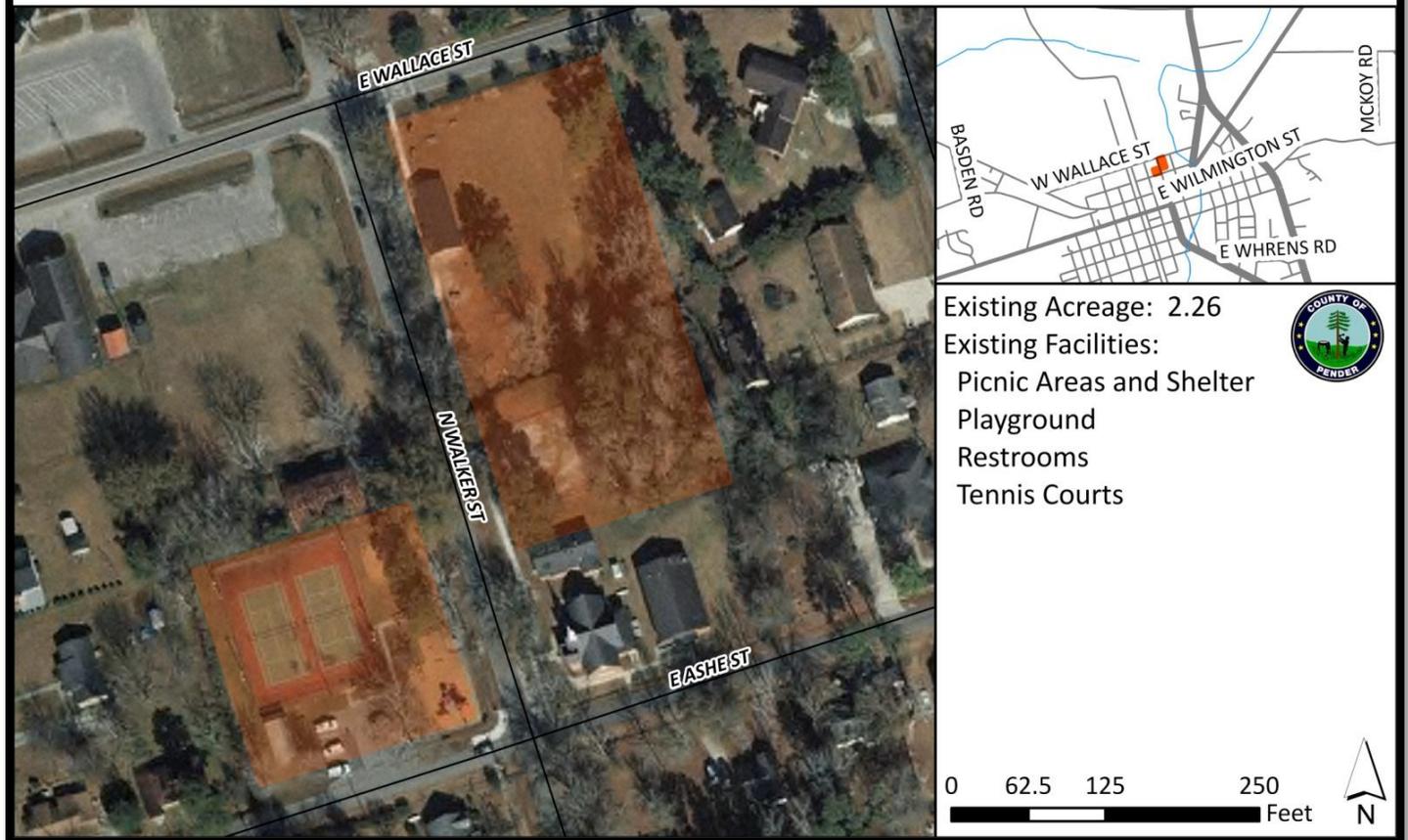
**Figure 6.8: Bush Marina (Town of Topsail Beach)**



## Town of Burgaw

The Town of Burgaw offers two parks that are located very close to each other, Bishop Rayford Hankins Memorial Park and W. Ross Harrell Memorial Park, both located on North Walker Street in the town. Hankins Park consists of a large open area with ample picnic tables and benches, a grill, and beautiful mature trees. There is also a lighted covered area that includes four large picnic tables and restroom facilities. A large gravel parking lot with approximately 12 spaces serves the passive recreation-oriented Hankins Park. Across the street lies Harrell Park; this park features a large, fenced play area with 3 swing sets, a large playground, a quant gazebo, and several benches and picnic tables. Also within Harrell Park there are two lighted, fenced tennis courts and a tennis/racquetball wall. Visitors to Harrell Park may use the large, paved parking lot or lock their bike to the provided bike rack. Although some minor repairs could be performed at Harrell Park, both Burgaw parks appear well maintained.

**Figure 6.9: Hankins and Harrell Memorial Parks (Town of Burgaw)**

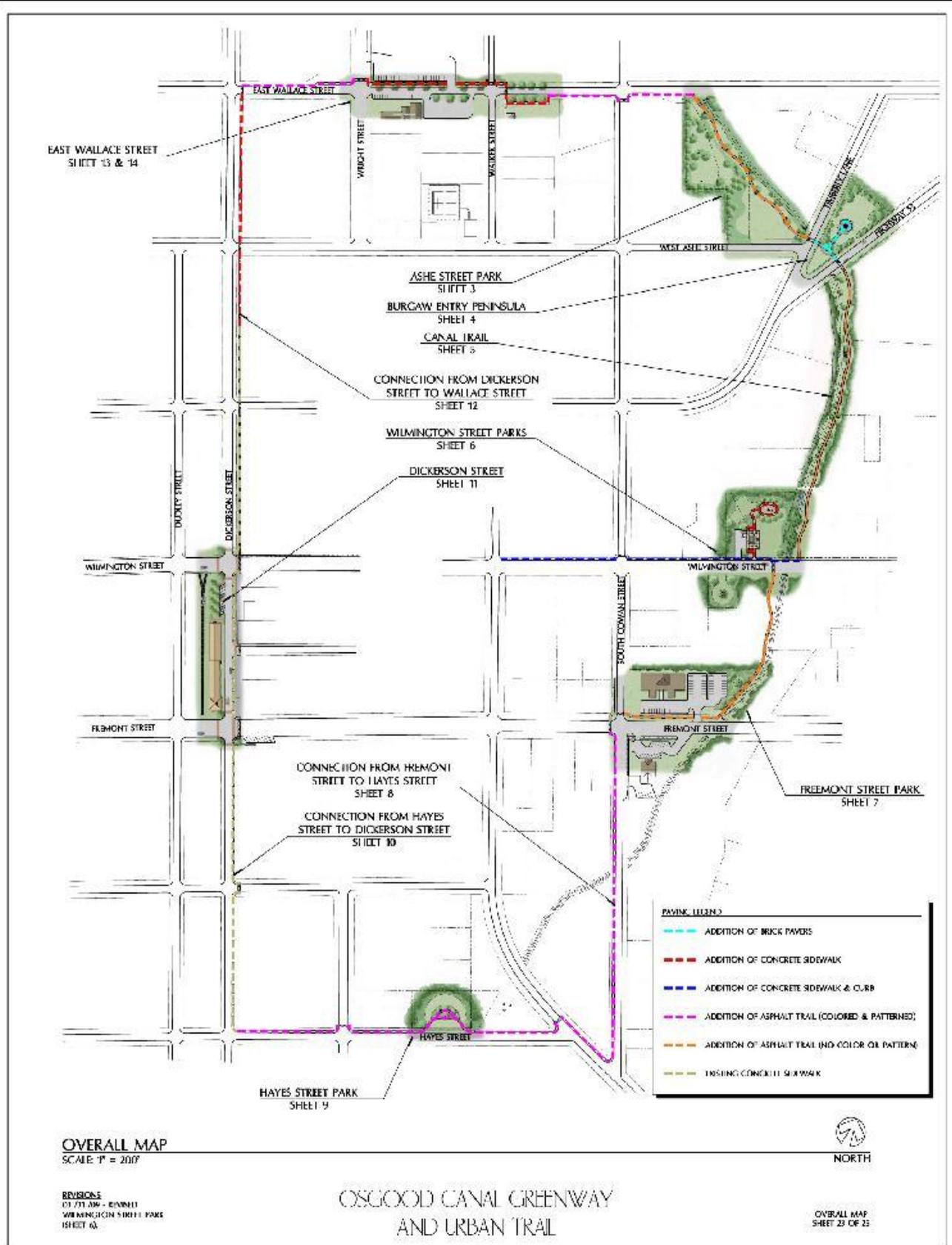


The Historic Burgaw Depot is also in the Town of Burgaw. This facility provides meeting space to 3 fundamental community groups: the Burgaw Area Chamber of Commerce, Pender County Arts Council, and the Burgaw Historical Preservation Foundation. The meeting room is available to these tenants free of charge, but is available to be rented by any community group. The newly renovated depot houses a small Art History Museum, an Event and Meeting Center, and a Commercial Kitchen Small Business Incubator. Use of the space and resources of this facility are available for usage with hourly rent. The building's spaces are also utilized by the North Carolina Blueberry Festival Planning Committee during the planning process and the delivery of the major annual weekend event.

During the development of this plan, Burgaw completed work on the first section of the Osgood Canal Greenway and Urban Trail. The trail was funded through PARTF monies leveraged with a town match, and three-quarters of a mile of paved pathway was completed in October 2009. When completed, the project will feature a two-mile network of greenways and sidewalks, and six new small parks. County efforts to develop an extended network of non-motorized

multi-use trails and greenways should include spurs that connect to the Burgaw area facilities, including a spur from the Pender County Government Campus on South Walker Street.

**Figure 6.10: Osgood Canal Greenway and Urban Trail and Planned Burgaw Parks**  
*Image courtesy of Burgaw Planning Department*

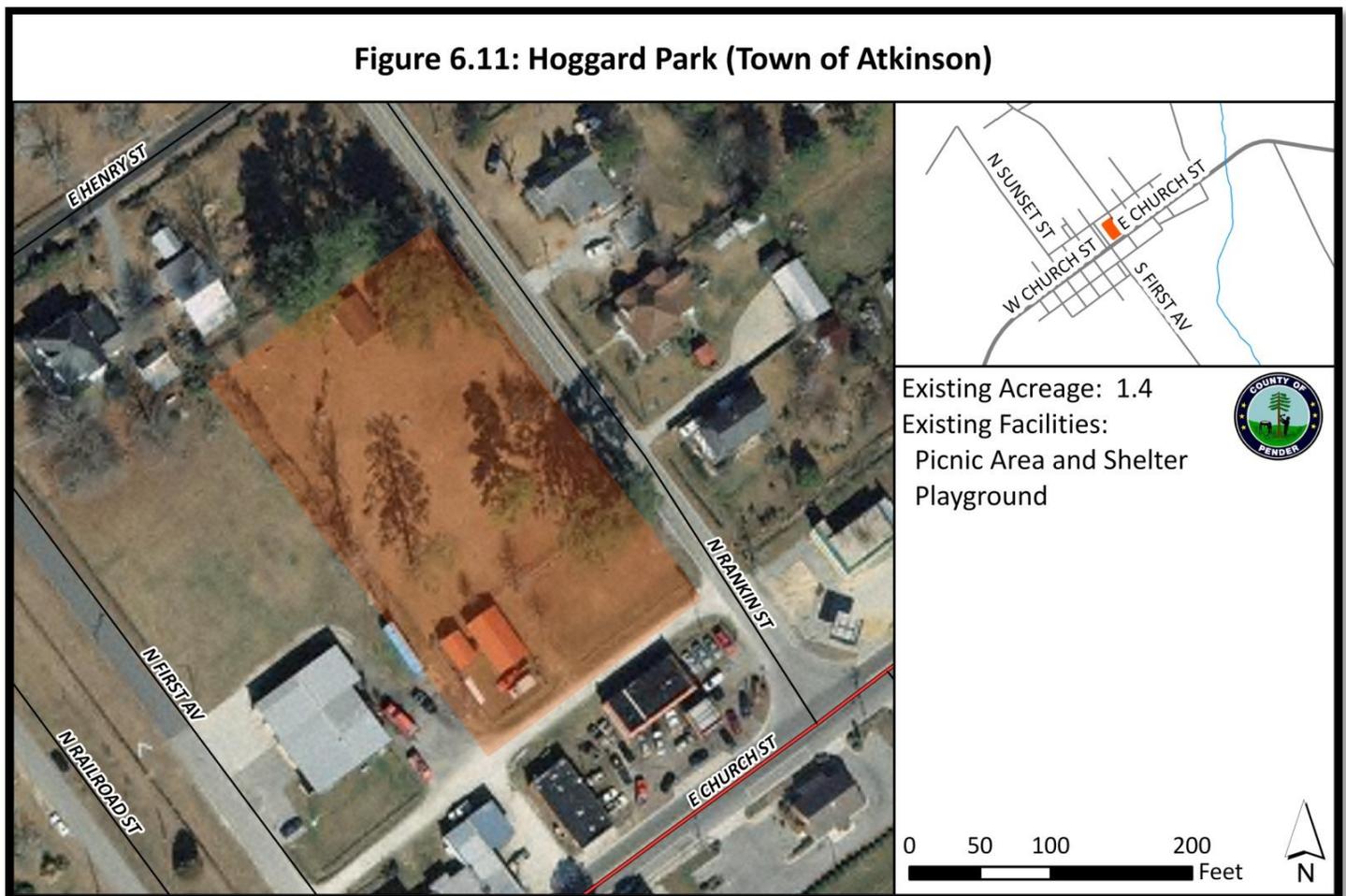


### *Town of Atkinson*

While Atkinson does not have a department dedicated to parks and recreation, the town does own and manage a 1.4 acre municipal park. Hoggard Park is located on the corner of East Church and North Rankin Streets, and features playground equipment including a jungle gym, several swing sets, multiple picnic tables, and a large open field. The park is enclosed in a chain link fence with a locking gate, and several lights were noted during the field assessment. Hoggard Park features an ample, grassed parking area for approximately 30 vehicles, and the landscaping consisted of natural mature pine trees and grassy areas. Interestingly noted during the field assessment was that the gate to the park was locked during the middle of the day.

The Town of Atkinson also retains ownership of the former Atkinson School adjacent to the town hall. The town leases the school building out to a private company that uses the building for retail purposes, but several recreational amenities are available for public use, including the gymnasium, and limited playground and exercise equipment.

**Figure 6.11: Hoggard Park (Town of Atkinson)**



### *Town of Watha*

The only facility noted in the Town of Watha during the facility assessment was the building used for the town hall and community center. Watha does not currently offer any recreational programming or additional facilities.

### *Village of St. Helena*

At the time of preparation of this document, the Village of St. Helena did not have any existing or planned parks and recreation facilities.

## Federal Facilities

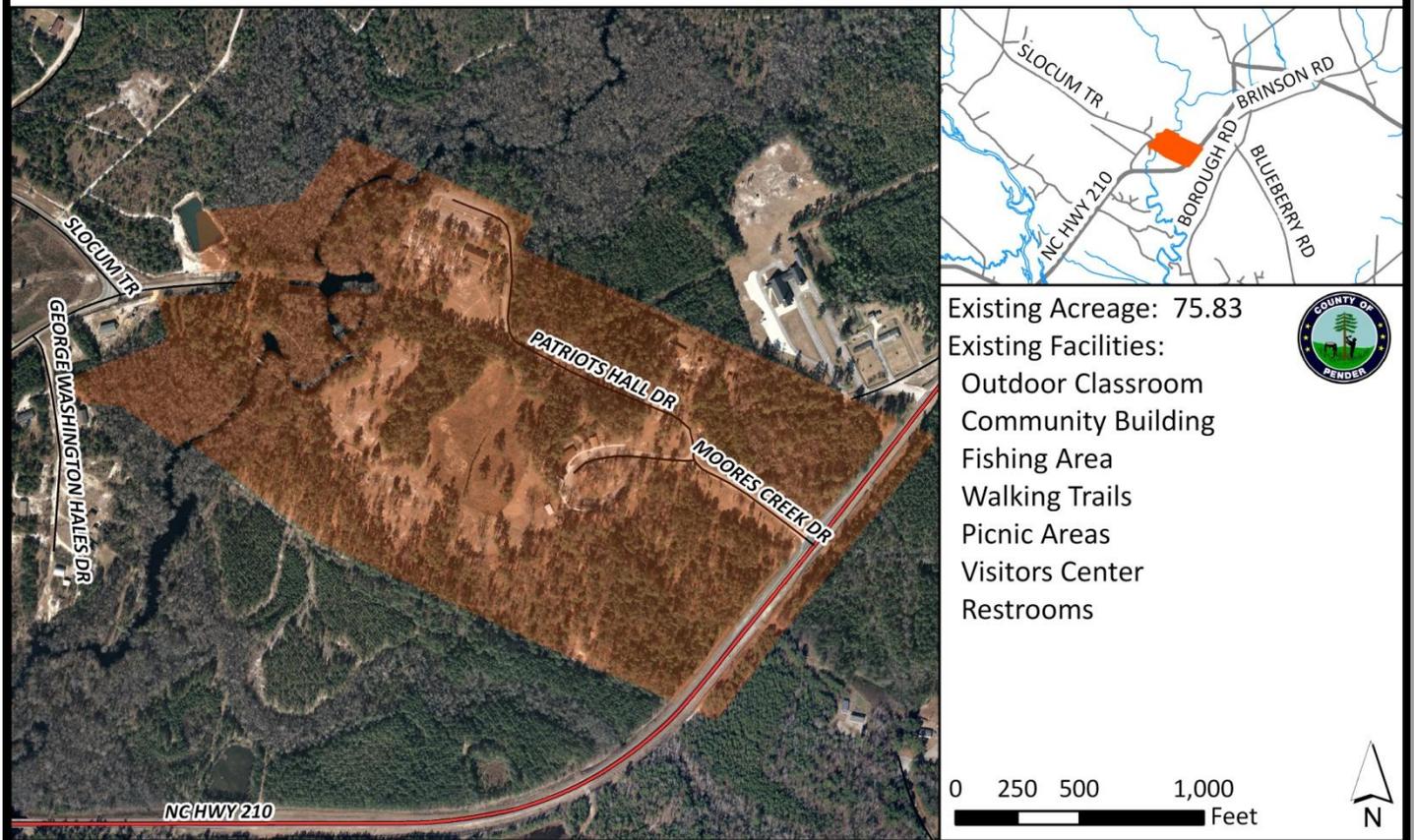
### National Parks Service - Moores Creek National Battlefield

The historic Battle of Moores Creek Bridge forever ended British rule in the colony when 1,000 North Carolina Patriots defeated over 1,600 Loyalists in February 1776. The site of this important battle is now home to the Moores Creek National Battlefield, a 76-acre area managed by the National Parks Service (NPS). The battlefield is located in the rural area of Currie, and features various programs including historic presentations, walking tours, and colonial music and demonstrations, particularly in summer months. The battle is commemorated annually during the last full weekend in February, and features living history encampments, weapons demonstrations, military music, and a wreath laying ceremony.

The battlefield attracts more than history buffs, however, as the area's expanse encompasses a variety of landscaped ranging from dry pine forests to a small, wet-pine savanna. The park is part of the NC Birding Trail, and the tidally-influenced "black water" of Moores Creek serves as a favorable location for birders to view migrating spring warblers. The park also features approximately one mile of walking trails and a large picnic area with a covered shelter, tables, charcoal grills, and restroom facilities. Fishing in the deep, black water of Moores Creek is allowed in the picnic area.

Moores Creek National Battlefield Staff is excited about the anticipated development for Moores Creek, including the Lillington-Caswell Education Center and a bio-learning center. Both facilities will feature new programs and educational opportunities. Battlefield Staff also indicated the importance of support and cooperation between Pender County and the National Parks Service at Moores Creek on future parks and recreation projects. Possible projects include public access to Moores Creek near the battlefield, and the West Pender Rail-Trail project. County Staff should encourage and facilitate dialogue in order to forge a strong partnership with the National Parks Service at Moores Creek for development of parks and recreational opportunities in the Currie area.

Figure 6.12: Moores Creek National Battlefield



## State Facilities

### NC Wildlife Resources Commission - Game Lands

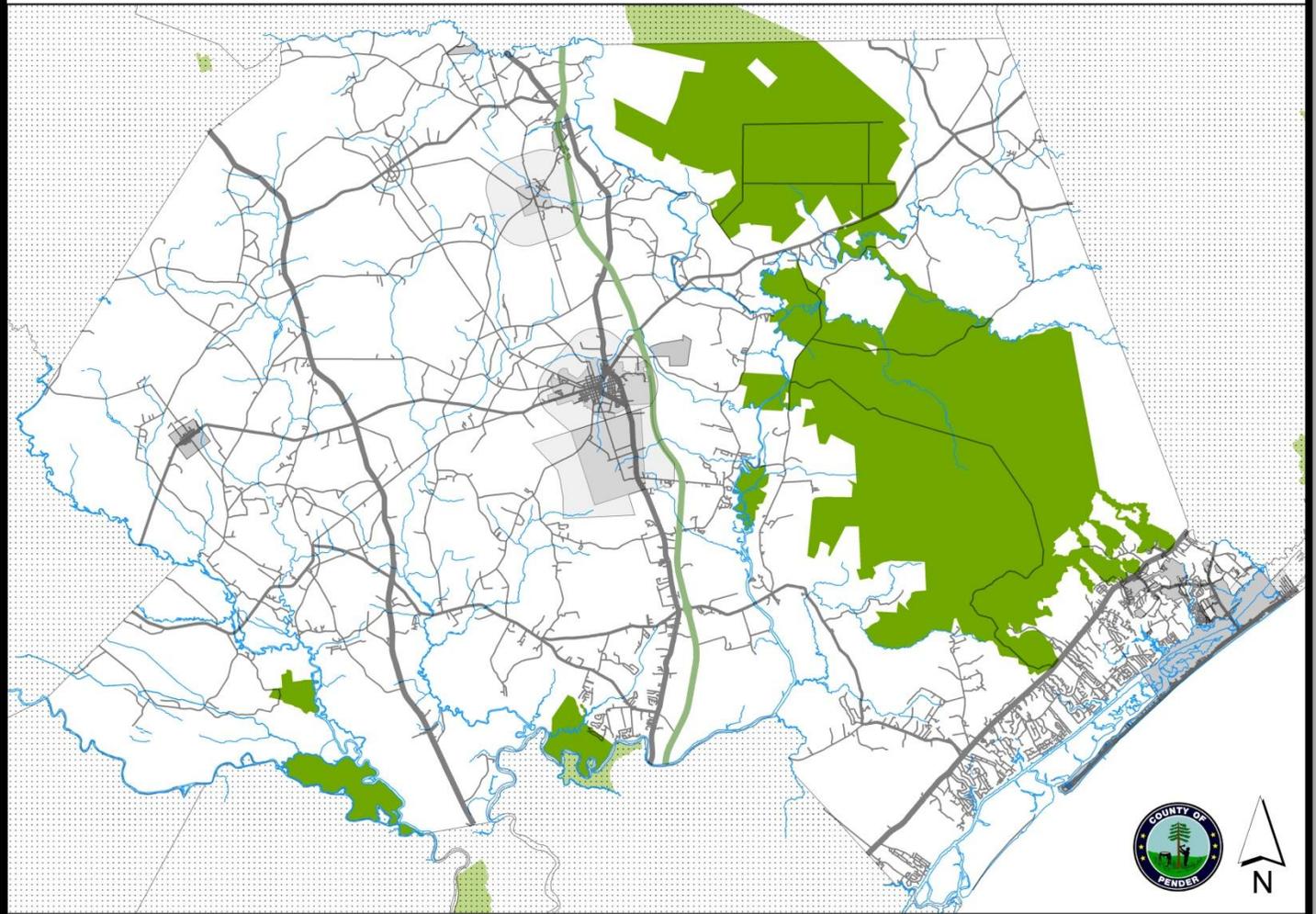
Pender County is host to almost 95,000 acres managed by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) as state game lands. These areas include the Angola Bay Game Land (24,483 acres), Holly Shelter Game Land (64,743 acres), and the Cape Fear River Wetlands Game Land (5,281 acres, some within New Hanover County). While the game lands are used primarily for hunting purposes, other recreational opportunities are allowed in the game lands such as bird watching, bicycling, and nature photography. The Holly Shelter Game Land also features a camping area near Shaw Highway.

While the recreational opportunities within the game lands are limited, potential for partnership with the Wildlife Resources Commission is still feasible. Possibilities include a collaborative effort to host a large marathon, biathlon, or triathlon event, and communication between Planning Staff and WRC Staff during the preparation of this plan indicated eager support from both parties on such a venture. The county should continue to explore possible events and programming that may be feasible within the game lands.



***Image 6.9: The WRC-managed game lands offer the county over 145 square miles of open space used for hunting, but also serves environmentally beneficial for biodiversity and flood mitigation.***

**Figure 6.13: Game Lands in Pender County**

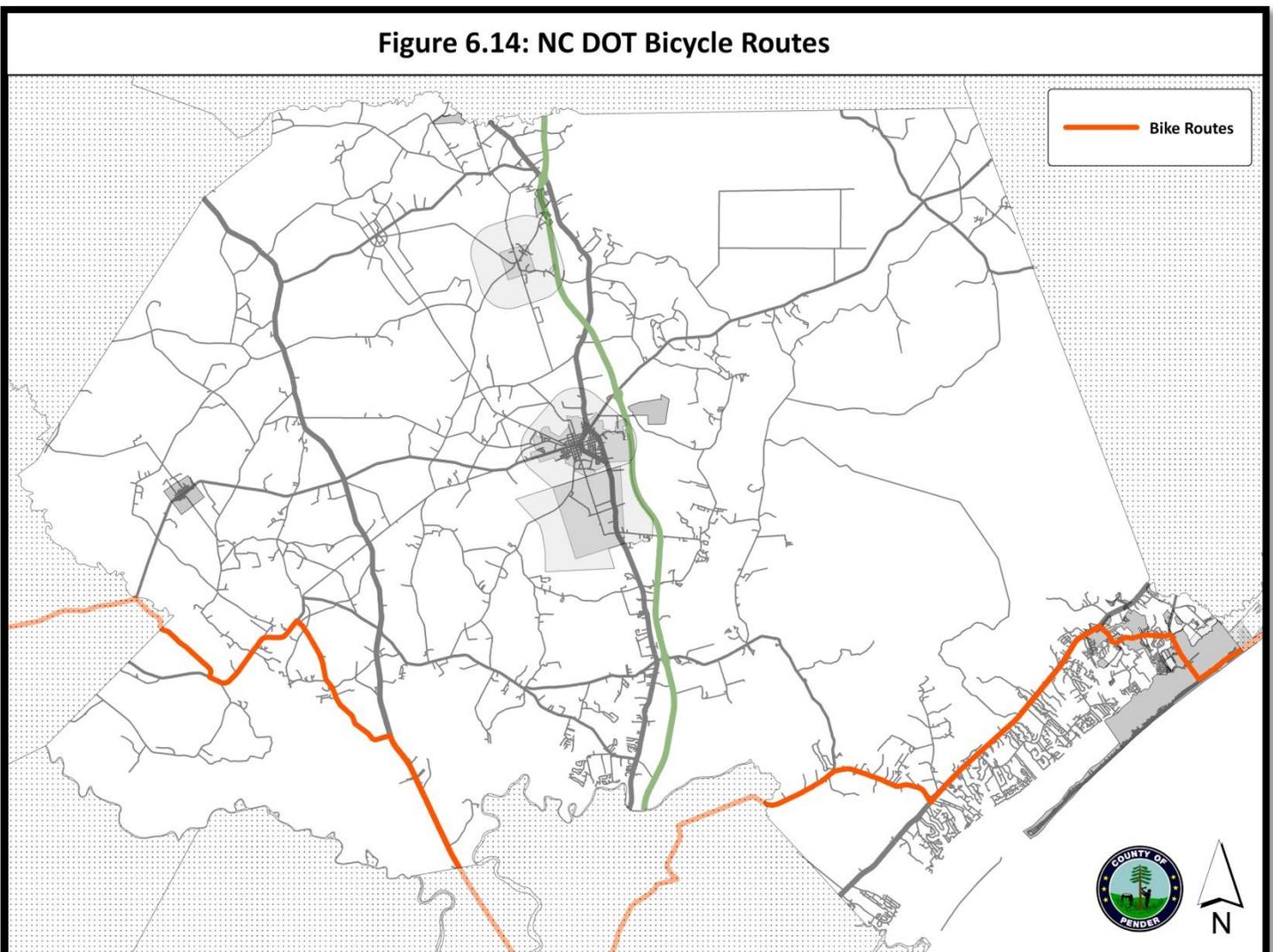


### NC Department of Transportation - Bicycle Routes

As depicted in Figure 6.14, Pender County is host to two NC DOT Bicycle Routes, *Route 3 – Ports of Call* and *Route 5 – Cape Fear Run*. Route 3 is a 300-mile route that runs from South Carolina to Virginia and takes users to all the major ports of the colonial era, including Southport, Wilmington, New Bern, Bath, and Edenton. From New Hanover County, the route travels from Holly Shelter Road into Pender County, at which point the road turns into Island Creek Road; the route then continues east and southeast on NC Highway 210. Route 3 continues northeast on NC Highway 210/US Highway 17 through Hampstead, then follows NC Highway 210 to Topsail Island. The route continues north on NC Highway 210 on Topsail Island into Onslow County.

Route 5 is a 160-mile route that roughly parallels the Cape Fear River through southeastern North Carolina. Traveling north from New Hanover County, the route follows US Highway 421 into Pender County until the route merges west onto Blueberry Road. At the terminus of Blueberry Road in Currie, the route then follows NC Highway 210 west to Morgan Road, and continues into Bladen County. Route 5 is also the current alignment of the East Coast Greenway.

It is recommended that Pender County work with NC DOT to improve the safety conditions of both of these bicycle routes, as well as publicize and encourage their use. Pender County Parks and Recreation should create downloadable cue cards, maps, brochures, and other hand-outs to inform users of the routes and appropriate safety precautions to be taken by riders, as well as campaign to motorists of the existence of these routes and their responsibility to share the road with bicyclists. According to NC DOT, Pender County currently ranks 55<sup>th</sup> in the state for the number of crashes within the county where at least one crash unit was a bicycle from 1997 to 2007, with a total of 34 crashes during this period. Safe bicycling and motoring habits should be educated and encouraged to county residents to limit crash incidents and create an environment within the county that is conducive to safe bicycling.



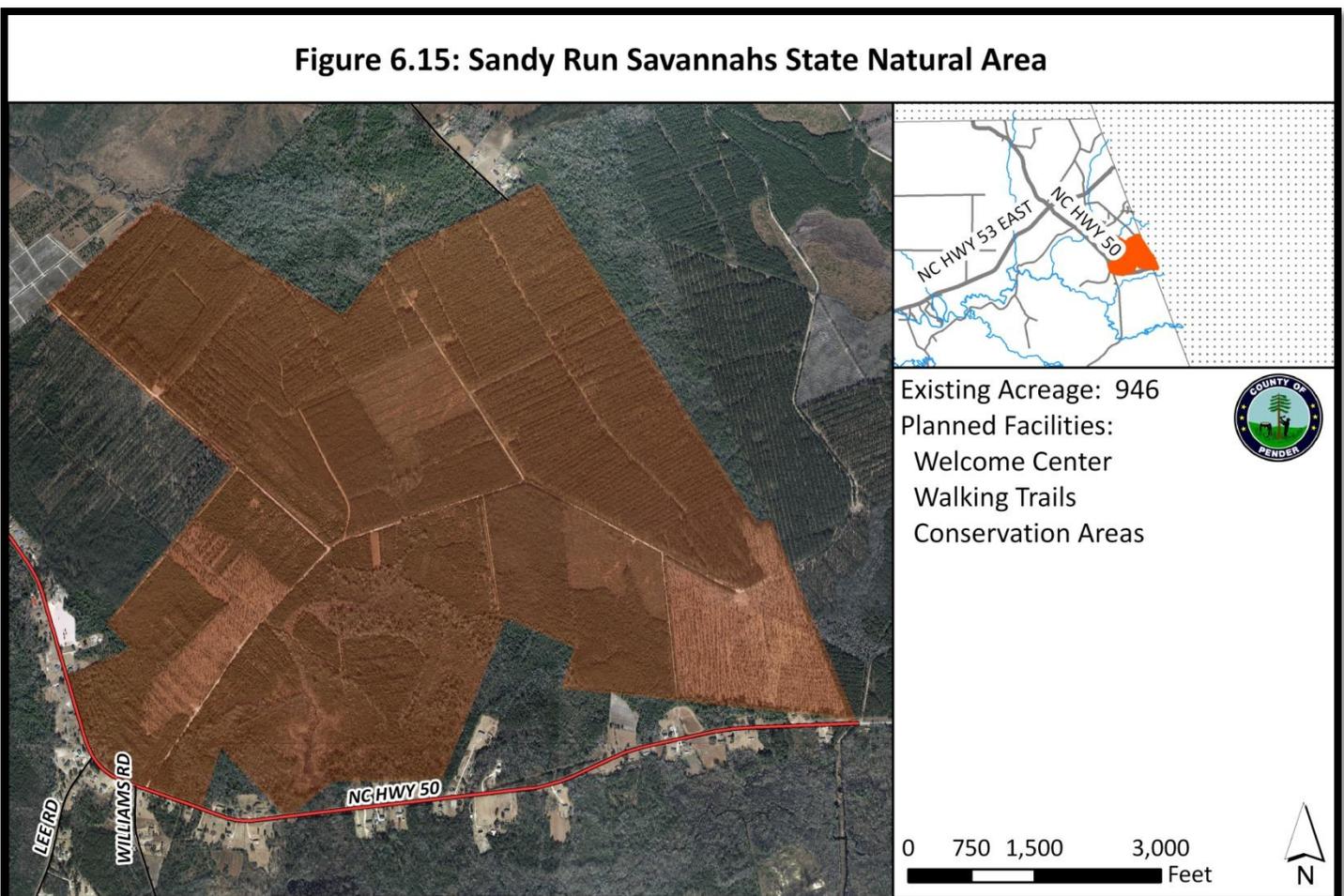
### NC Division of Parks and Recreation - Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area

During the 2006 North Carolina General Assembly, legislators authorized two new areas into the state parks system, including the Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area in Pender and Onslow Counties. Within Pender County, twelve parcels totaling 1609.27 acres were purchased by the state from the Nature Conservancy for inclusion in the new state natural area.

According to information provided by the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area has much potential for scientific research, interpretation, and educational activities, but little potential for construction of recreational facilities. This is due to the wet characteristics and ecologically sensitive nature of the majority of the land. Additional land more suitable for facility development may be pursued in the future to enable additional recreational opportunities, specifically picnic shelters and other passive-recreation oriented facilities.

There is great potential for a partnership between Pender County and the NC Division of Parks and Recreation for recreational development and management in the future at Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area, and this partnership was preliminarily discussed during the creation of this plan. There is currently a deficiency of parks and recreation facilities in the Maple Hill area, and a joint effort between the county and the state could fill this void. Pender County should continue exploring this mutually-beneficial partnership.

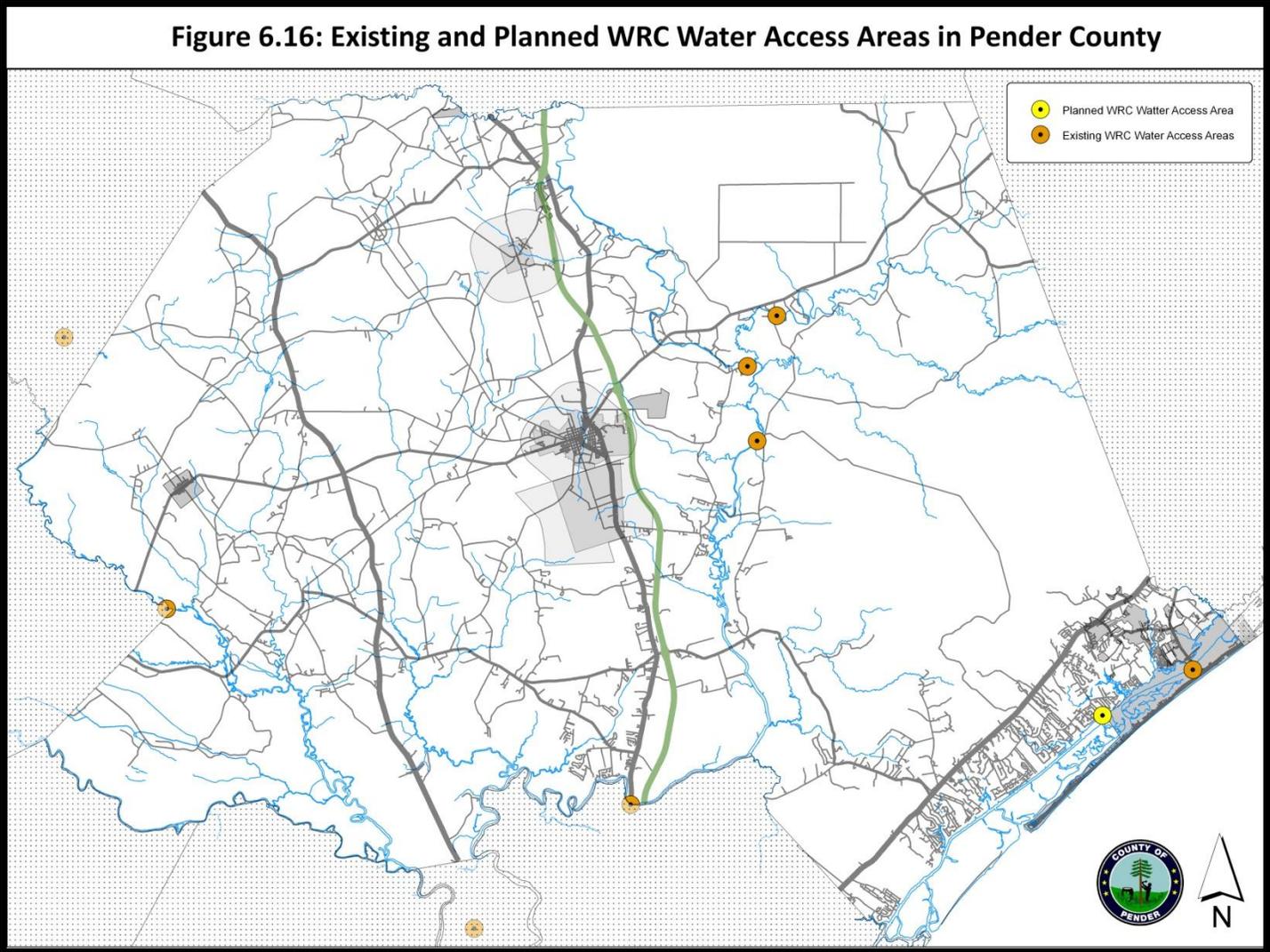
**Figure 6.15: Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area**



### NC Wildlife Resources Commission - Water Access Areas

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission manages several public boating access areas in and around Pender County. The Northeast Cape Fear River may be accessed by two locations in Pender County, Sawpit Landing and Holly Shelter, and also by one location near the Pender – New Hanover County border in Castle Hayne. Currently, only one public boat access area to the Intracoastal Waterway exists in Pender County, and is located within Soundside Park in Surf City. At the time of publication of this plan, an additional public boat access area at the terminus of Lewis Road in the Hampstead area was in the planning stages. No public water access is available to the Black and Cape Fear Rivers in Pender County, although both Samson and Bladen Counties host boating access areas that provide access to the Black River.

As population growth and development ensues in Pender County, it is necessary to work with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission to plan for new boating access areas within the county. A portion of the population growth projected is composed of people moving to Pender County because of the attractive water resources in the area, and it is important to ensure that these needs will be fulfilled. Additional water access areas within the county will relieve the burden of the existing boating access areas, as the service levels may become exhausted with increasing levels of use. More information on the recommended NC Wildlife Resources Commission-managed boating access areas may be found under *Facility Recommendations* later in this section.



## Private Facilities

A variety of private recreational facilities and opportunities exist within Pender County. Some of the opportunities available include camp grounds, golf courses, dance studios, gyms and fitness centers, martial arts programs, aquatics center, arts and scrapbooking studios, and charter fishing. A complete matrix of private recreational facilities may be found in the *Appendix (Facility Matrix 2)*.

## Community Centers

As mentioned in the *Funding Recommendations* section, Pender County should explore and encourage a partnership with existing and future community centers. A partnership with these community centers will provide a mutually-beneficial relationship, utilize and improve on existing facilities, and avoid duplication of programming and facilities. Currently, there are five existing community centers in the county, and one that is in the planning stages. More information on each is highlighted below, and a detailed inventory of the existing facilities at the community centers is incorporated into *Facility Matrix 2* in the *Appendix*.



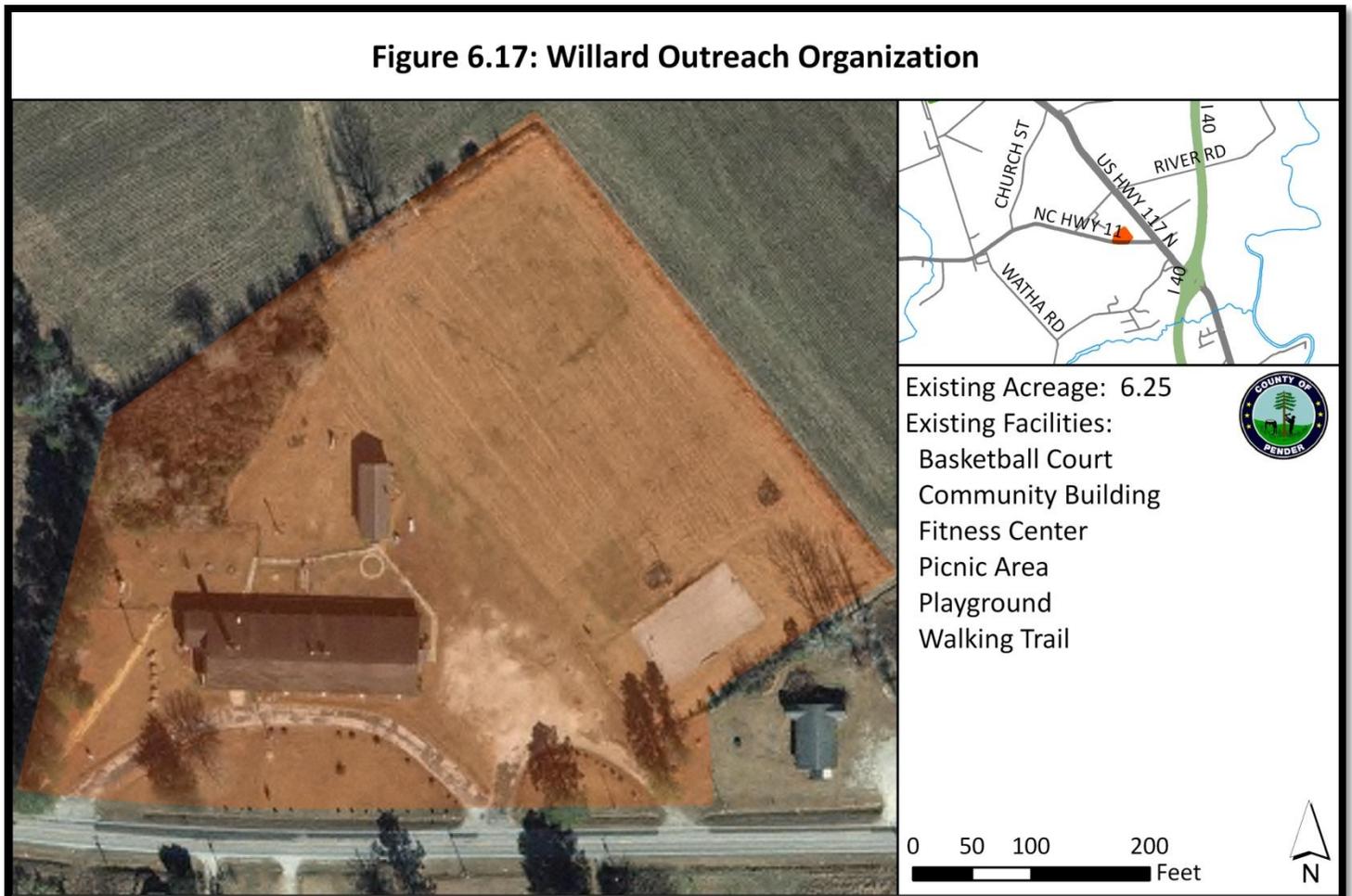
***Image 6.10: Private community centers in the county offer recreation opportunities through the amenities and programs available. Strengthened partnerships with each community center should be explored to maximize available resources and avoid duplication of facilities and programs.***

### *Willard Outreach Organization*

The Willard Outreach Center is located near the intersection of NC highway 11 and US Highway 117 in Willard. The facility is a former school building, and is located on a 6.25 acre tract. During the field assessment, Planning Staff had the opportunity to meet with Willard Outreach Center staff members to discuss a potential partnership for funding pursuit and programming, of which both parties expressed a sincere interest. The amenities existing at the facility include the building, an outdoor basketball court, a large field used for walking trails, a nice picnic area, and a significant fenced-in playground area. The building itself is in need of some renovation and repairs, particularly to the climate control system and roof. Additionally, some updating and upfitting is desired and needed at the facility, such as driveway improvements, ADA accessibility improvements, and restroom renovations.

While the recommended Willard Community Park would fill a portion of the deficiency of recreational facilities in the Willard area, a partnership with the Willard Outreach Center would create a facility for recreational programming, in addition to the established and motivated, community-oriented staff of individuals excited about the possibility of such a partnership. During meetings between Planning Staff and Willard Outreach Center Staff, the Center Staff expressed a strong desire for additional programming for obesity prevention and education, senior activities, youth activities, and a variety of specialized programs including computer and technology classes for community residents. Currently, the Center offers programming including martial arts, fitness and nutrition classes, sewing classes, and bible study programs. A partnership between Pender County and the Willard Outreach Center is recommended and encouraged.

**Figure 6.17: Willard Outreach Organization**

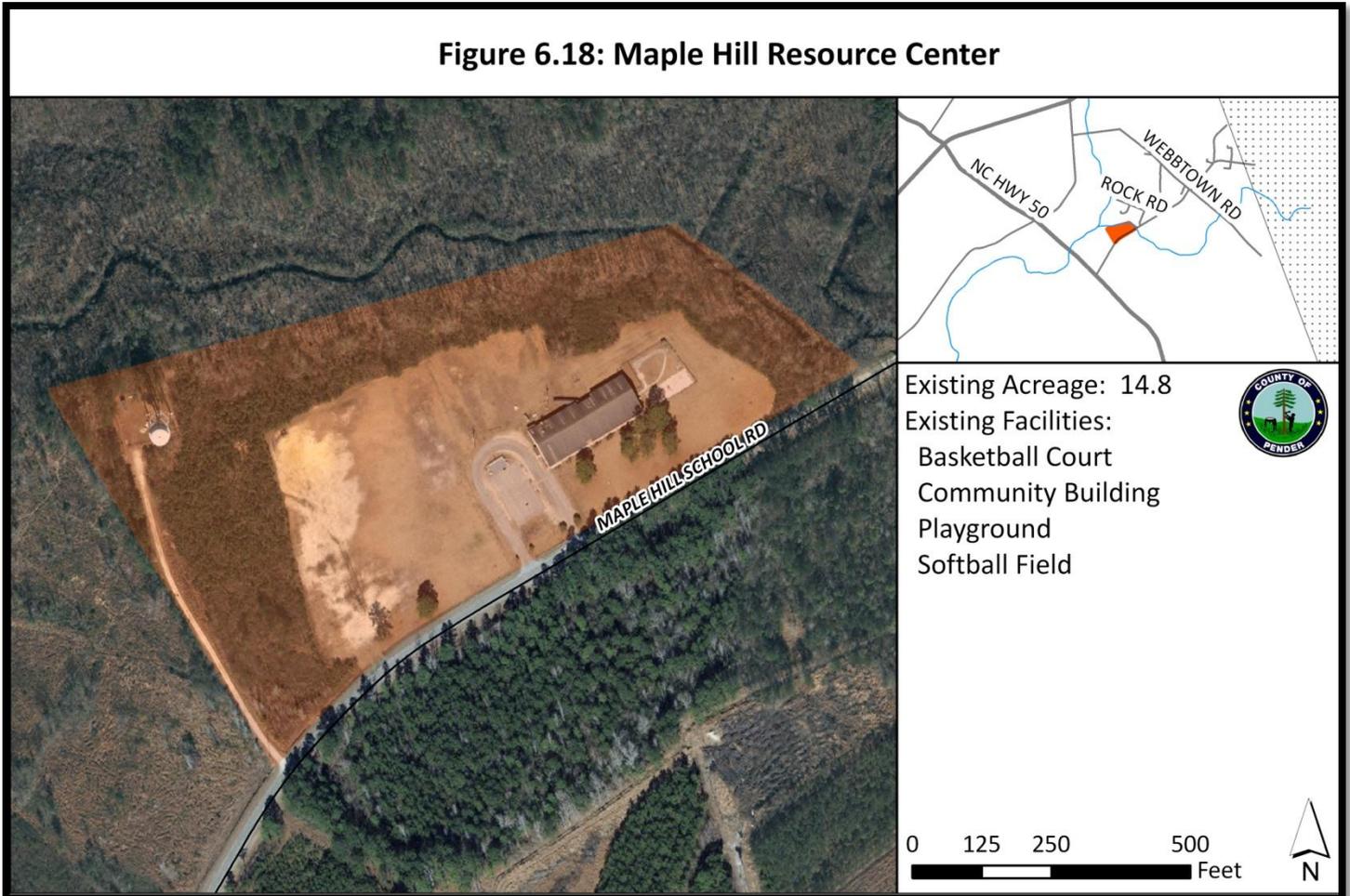


### Maple Hill Resource Center

The Maple Hill Resource Center is located on Maple Hill School Road in the unincorporated area of Maple Hill in the northeastern part of Pender County. Like the Willard Outreach Organization, the Maple Hill Resource Center is located within a former Pender County school building, although the parcel consists of 14.8 acres. The Resource Center serves as a community gathering place for Maple Hill area residents, and features recreational amenities including an outdoor basketball court, a softball field, a playground, as well as the community building.

A deficiency of parks and recreational opportunities currently exists in the Maple Hill area, with the Resource Center providing the only opportunities, which are limited. This deficiency was a point of frustration for the Maple Hill residents that attended the public input meeting in the area, and community members overwhelmingly indicated a willingness to contribute to programming and facility development and management. More specifics of the needs expressed at the Maple Hill public input meeting may be found in the *Public Input* section. The geographical location of Maple Hill also serves to be a disadvantage for residents, as they currently must travel to Burgaw or into Onslow County to participate in recreation programs or enjoy park facilities. Although county staff currently works with the Maple Hill Resource Center, strengthening this partnership further by providing guidance and resource support would serve to alleviate the deficiency of facilities and opportunities in Maple Hill.

Figure 6.18: Maple Hill Resource Center



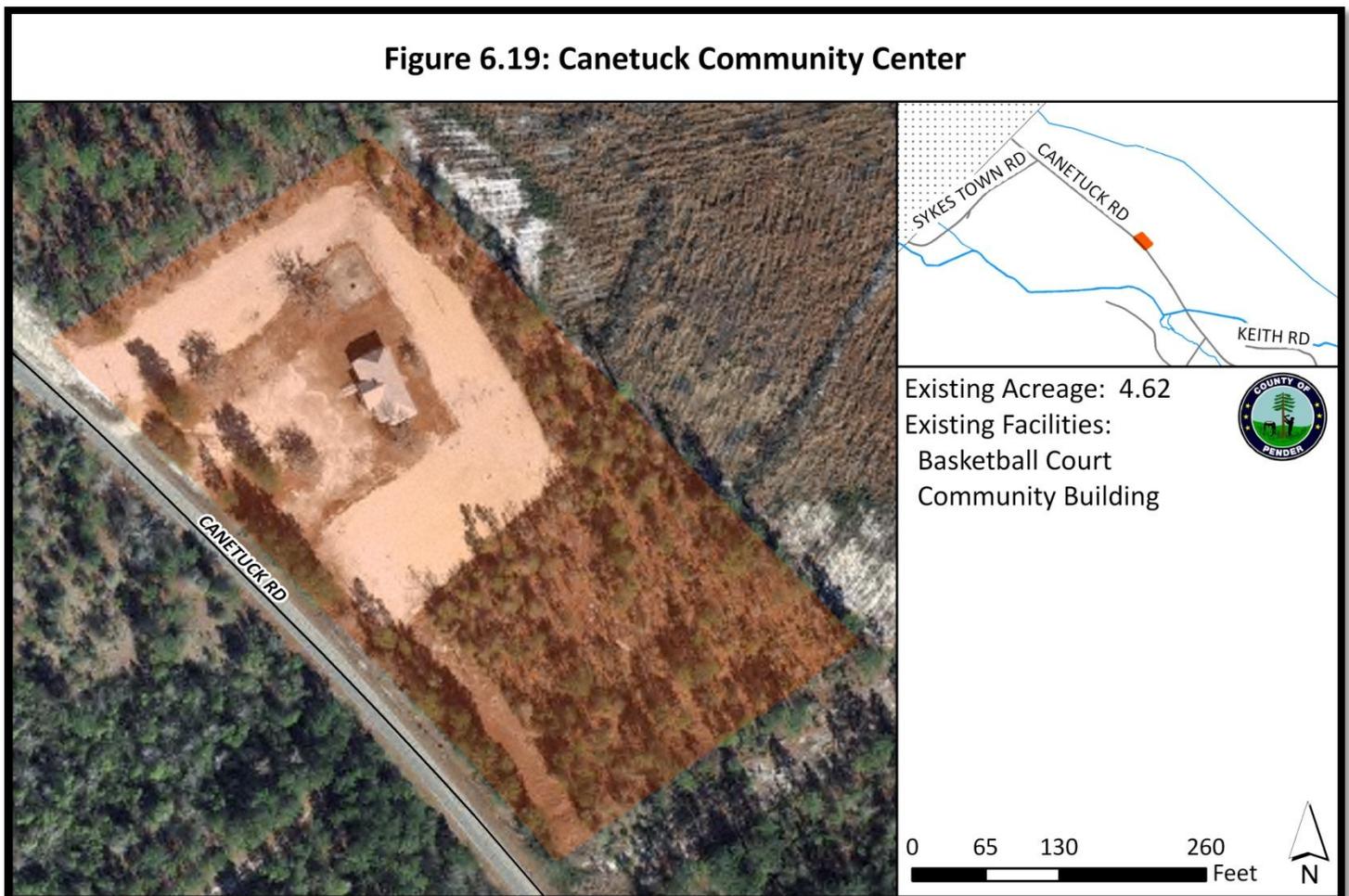
### Canetuck Community Center

The Canetuck Community Center is located in the southwestern portion of the county, along Canetuck Road near the Pender – Bladen County border. The Canetuck Community Center is unique in that the building is a historic Rosenwald School. Between 1917 and 1929, Pender County obtained support from the Rosenwald Fund for 19 buildings on 15 school sites, with funding coming from a grant program set up by Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald to fund the development of up to 100 schools in the southeast. Prior to the 2010 Pender County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan project, Planning Staff met with Canetuck Community Center staff and other interested parties to facilitate procurement of grant money for building renovation and preservation, and Canetuck Community Center staff and private parties remain in pursuit of necessary funding required to meet several objectives for the community center.

The Canetuck Community Center currently serves as the community center for the Canetuck area, as well as the voting precinct for the area. Recreational opportunities are limited, and the site currently hosts only an outdoor basketball court that is in need of refurbishing. Canetuck Community Center staff indicated a desire for many improvements to the facility, including landscaping, walking trails, picnic shelters, fitness equipment, minimal playground equipment, fencing and other security improvements, and even a vehicle for transporting community members, particularly elders. Programming desires were also expressed, including programs such as fitness and wellness programs, music and computer classes, and others.

Recreational opportunities in the Canetuck area are virtually nonexistent, and a partnership between the center and Pender County is recommended and encouraged to fill the deficiency in the area.

**Figure 6.19: Canetuck Community Center**



### *Joint Community Development Center*

The Joint Community Development Center is located on highway 210 in Rocky Point. Built and opened in the early 1960s as a senior center, the center was open daily to serve a lunch meal and frequently offered scheduled recreational activities. Although the center's community building is neither unlocked nor open to the public any longer on a regularly scheduled basis, the multi-use fields are kept up regularly and the undeveloped spaces are available for daily recreational use. Softball fields are used regularly for small pick-up games and leagues, and two grass basketball courts are also located at the center. When the community center is open for an event, several amenities are available for use including a kitchen, restrooms and a multipurpose room. A wide variety of community members use this facility for a plethora of activities including birthday parties, family reunions, and as a meeting space for an array of civic interest groups. Many children's day camps have also been hosted at the center in the fall, summer, and spring seasons by the Development Center itself, and have also been sponsored by the local Boys' and Girls' Club. This facility has served the community well for about 50 years, and the Joint Community Development Center coordinators hope for future improvements on the softball field, basketball court, and handicapped accessibility in their facility, in addition to a walking trail and playground equipment that would to increase the center's recreational opportunities for community members of all ages.



***Image 6.11: The Joint Community Development Center offers a variety of recreational opportunities to residents of the Rocky Point area.***

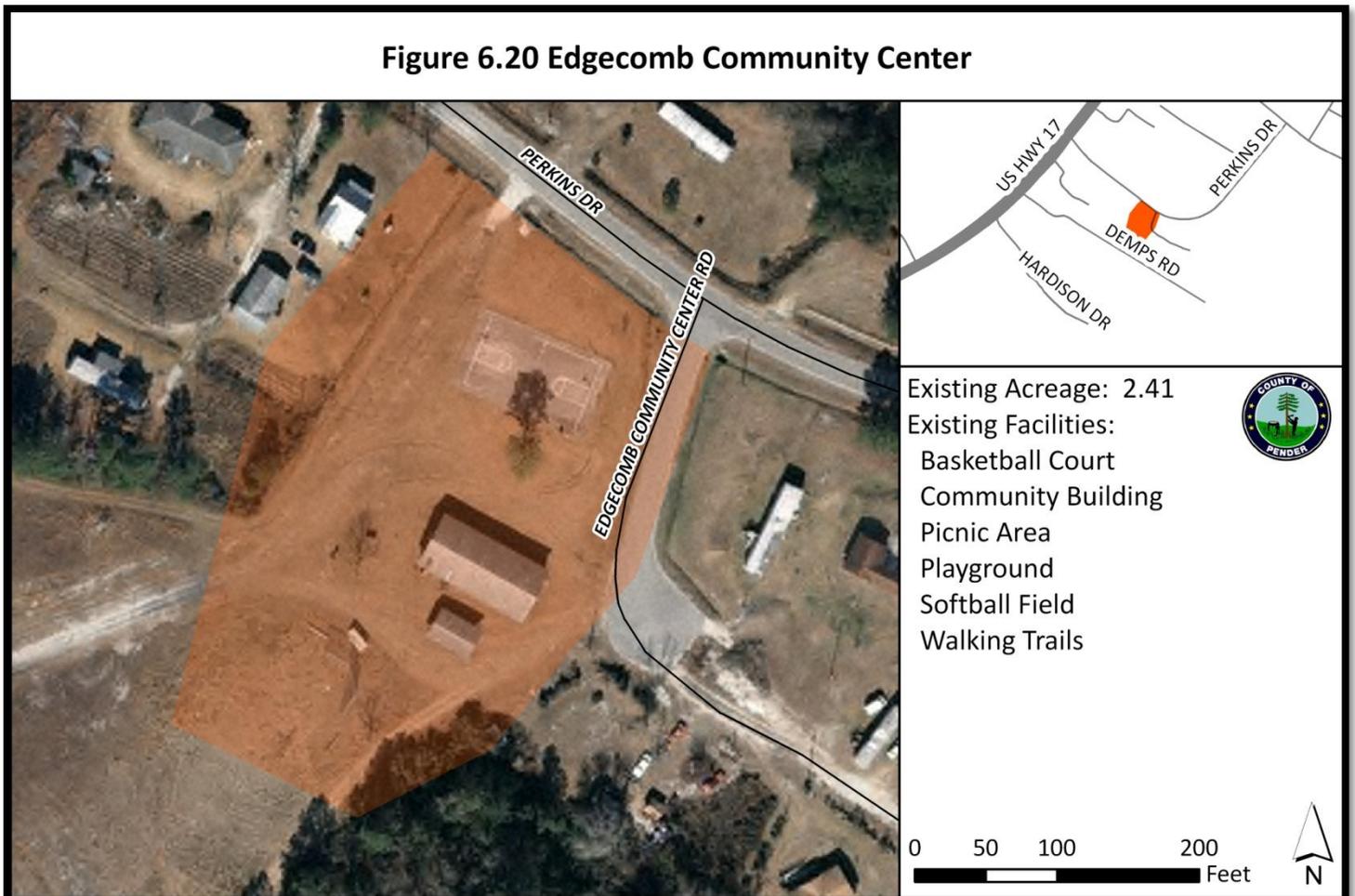
### *Caswell Community Center*

During the preparation of this plan, Planning Staff was approached by a representative from the Caswell Community Center for assistance in developing the facility. The Caswell Community Center has acquired and cleared a 5.29 acre tract of land on Slocum Trail, outside of Atkinson. Caswell Community Center staff indicated that the organization would like to have a community center building, outdoor basketball and adult softball facilities, parking area, and some other amenities, potentially including a playground, picnic shelter with picnic tables, and walking trails. The Caswell Community Center's proximity in the northwestern quadrant of Pender County makes the facility prime for an ideal partnership with Pender County for facility development and management, as well as programming opportunities in an area of the county with a deficiency of recreational facilities and programming opportunities. It is recommended that Pender County continue to explore, encourage, and facilitate this mutually-beneficial partnership.

### Edgecomb Community Center

Located off of Highway 17 in northern Hampstead, the Edgecomb Community Center features a mature community building, a softball field, basketball court, picnic shelter, playground equipment, a walking trail, and open areas. The community building features restrooms and a multi-purpose room, and is used by members of the community for parties, family reunions, and group meetings. The building is also utilized by children for afterschool and summer activities; building reservations may be made by contacting the Center's president.

Figure 6.20 Edgecomb Community Center



## Pender County School Facilities

During the facility inventory performed by Planning Staff, each of the sixteen Pender County schools was evaluated in order to limelight their existing facilities. While these facilities are not specifically open for public use, it was important to incorporate these facilities into the inventory, as a future partnership between the school system and the parks and recreation department is a feasible option. Including the facilities that occur at the school sites will help to avoid facility duplication should an agreement for public use of the school facilities be negotiated between the two departments. A detailed inventory for the parks and recreation facilities located at schools may be found under *Facility Matrix 3* in the *Appendix*.

## Select Other Private Facilities

### *Rouse Field at the former Topsail High School*

Situated in Hampstead along Highway 17, the former Topsail High School site hosts the old school building and a baseball/softball field that is utilized by the Topsail Ball Club for practice and games. The building is currently vacant and not suitable for habitation in its current condition; several local fire departments currently use the building for strategic emergency operations drills. While the county currently owns the property, at the time of publication of this plan there was no intention to restore the building or retain ownership of the property.

### *Poplar Grove Plantation*

Located in the Scotts Hill area, Poplar Grove Plantation is one of the oldest existing peanut plantations in North Carolina. Originally purchased in 1795 by James Foy, Jr, the vast acreage and the 4,284 square foot Greek Revival Style manor house that adorns it now provides many opportunities for community members and tourists to enjoy, including tours, many arts and crafts classes, an herb and garden fair, an annual classic car show and other special and holiday events. Poplar Grove Plantation is also available to host weddings, family reunions, company meetings, and other events.

### *Dolphin Aquatics and Fitness “Coastal Lifestyle Center”*

Dolphin Aquatics and Fitness is a non-profit organization that is pursuing the development of a private, fee-based community aquatic and wellness center in Hampstead. The organization has already received approval from the Pender County Planning Board for their master development plan, and is scheduled to return to the Planning Board in summer 2010 to submit a preliminary site plan. According to Planning Staff, the organization has proposed a variety of amenities at the planned facility, including pools, a climbing tower, ropes course, volleyball courts, picnic shelters, and grilling areas. The proposed center will serve to fill a variety of recreational needs in the Hampstead area, and it is recommended that the county pursue a partnership or collaboration with the organization as this project moves forward.

### *Dave Richie Landing at Cross Creek Subdivision*

The Cross Creek Homeowners Association owns two parcels of land adjacent to a Harrisons Creek and Spring Branch, both tributaries of the Northeast Cape Fear River. The North Carolina Coastal Land Trust holds a perpetual conservation easement on one of the parcels, which totals 80.12 acres. The adjacent 1.56-acre parcel hosts a small, shallow-water boat ramp, the Dave Richie Landing, utilized by the public for canoe and kayak access. This water access should be included in a future Pender County blueway plan.



**Image 6.12: The Dave Richie Landing in the Cross Creek Subdivision allows for canoe and kayak access to Spring Branch, a tributary of the Northeast Cape Fear River.**

## Facility Standards and Distribution

A major component of the parks assessment was to examine the level of service provided under the current county parks and recreation system, as well as make recommendations for future service levels. The facility matrix in the *Appendix* was completed for all of the existing county parks, and evaluated based on existing NRPA standards. Finally, the evaluations to NRPA standards were compared to the community trends and desires.

### NRPA and Community-Based Standards

The NRPA recommended levels of service standards are based on numbers, acres, or miles of parks and recreation facilities per a certain number of persons, and have been used to determine the need for each type of facility for many years. However, since the mid-1990's, the method to determine what type and number of facilities should be planned for a particular community has shifted to be based more largely on the input expressed from community residents. As such, the recommendations in this plan for existing park renovations and new parks and facilities were based largely on the desired level of service expressed by the residents of Pender County through information gathered from the public input meetings and survey. Table 6.4, the facility inventory executed by Planning Staff during this project, was used to develop the recommendations for new facilities and existing facility renovations.

### Facility Surplus/Deficit

Planning Staff conducted an inventory of the facilities in the Pender County parks system, which may be found under *Facility Matrix 1* in the *Appendix*. This inventory includes the facilities at Hampstead Kiwanis Park and Pender Memorial Park, including improvements and upgrades that were being planned and performed during the preparation of this plan. Additionally, the acreage and amenities planned for Phase I of Millers Pond Park were included within the existing facilities because park development was underway and funded during the preparation of this plan.

Table 6.4 uses Pender County's 2010 and 2015 population estimates obtained from the US Census Bureau to determine where deficiencies and surpluses exist within the county's park system. The totals for existing facilities were derived from a complete inventory of Pender County parks and recreation facilities, and the facility surplus/deficit calculations were derived from the NRPA recommended levels of service standards in the top portion of the table. In the bottom portion, the NRPA recommended levels of service were adjusted to reflect community-based desired levels of service, based on the feedback received during the public input period. As explained earlier in this section, these NRPA recommended levels of service, and the adjusted community-based desired levels of service, are merely used as a basis to gauge the Pender County park system's facility inventory. Particular amenities at recommended new parks and park expansions should be determined based on the specific community's public input, as well as further public input meetings during the planning and design process for each new facility and facility expansion.

An important note to consider is that the deficiencies shown in Table 6.4 account only for parks and recreation facilities managed by Pender County, including Hampstead Kiwanis Park, Pender Memorial Park, and Millers Pond Park. The figures do not account for facilities under private ownership or operated by municipalities within Pender County. If such facilities were included, the deficiencies within the county would be less. However, while privately owned facilities such as church, school, and privately-owned facilities alleviate the necessity for some amenities, they often have limited or restricted access and therefore do not provide the same opportunities and accessibility for the community as public park facilities do.

**Table 6.4: Pender County Parks and Recreation Facility Surplus/Deficit**

Using NRPA-Recommended Levels of Service						
	Existing Number of Pender County Park Facilities	NRPA Recommended Level of Service	Current Facility Need Based on Estimated 2010 Population (55,237)	Current Facility Deficit/Surplus	2015 Facility Need Based on Estimated 2015 Population (63,479)	2015 Facility Deficit/Surplus
Acreage	140.85	10/1,000	552	-412	667	-526
Outdoor Basketball	0	1/5,000	11	-11	13	-13
Tennis	0	1/2,000	28	-28	32	-32
Volleyball	1	1/5,000	11	-10	13	-12
Baseball/Softball	9	1/5,000	11	-2	13	-4
Football	5	1/20,000	3	2	3	2
Soccer	6	1/10,000	6	0	6	0
Aquatics/Pools	0	1/20,000	3	-3	3	-3
Running Track	0	1/20,000	3	-3	3	-3
Trail System	1.5	1 mile/3,000	18	-17	21	-20
Playground	2	1/1,000	55	-53	63	-61
Recreation Center	0	1/50,000	1	-1	1	-1
Picnic Pavilion	2	1/2,000	28	-26	32	-30
Skate Park	0	1/100,000	1	-1	1	-1
Using Community-Based Desired Levels of Service						
	Existing Number of Pender County Park Facilities	Community-Based Desired Level of Service	Current Facility Need Based on Estimated 2010 Population (55,237)	Current Facility Deficit/Surplus	2015 Facility Need Based on Estimated 2015 Population (63,479)	2015 Facility Deficit/Surplus
Acreage	140.85	10/1000	552	-412	635	-494
Outdoor Basketball	0	1/3,000	18	-18	21	-21
Tennis	0	1/3,000	18	-18	21	-21
Volleyball	1	1/5,000	11	-10	13	-12
Baseball/Softball	9	1/4,000	14	-5	16	-7
Football	5	1/15,000	4	1	4	1
Soccer	6	1/8,000	7	-1	8	-3
Aquatics/Pools	0	1/20,000	3	-3	3	-3
Running Track	0	1/20,000	3	-3	3	-3
Trail System	1.5	1 mile/2,000	28	-26	32	-30
Playground	2	1/1,000	55	-53	63	-61
Recreation Center	0	1/20,000	3	-3	3	-3
Picnic Pavilion	2	1/2,000	28	-26	32	-30
Skate Park	0	1/100,000	1	-1	1	-1

Population Estimate Data Source: US Census Bureau (www.census.gov)

As detailed in Table 6.4, by comparing Pender County’s park system inventory to the NRPA recommended levels of service, the county’s inventory is deficient in each of the selected comparison areas except for one. These comparisons are concurrent with the consensus of the public input that more facilities are needed within the county, particularly basketball, walking trails, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and football fields. When planning and developing new facilities, existing user trends and public input should be used to decide what specific amenities should be developed within each new park or park expansion, rather than arbitrarily developing facilities in an effort to bring the system inventory in line with the historically-used NRPA recommendations.

Table 6.5 below uses the NRPA-based recommendations to determine the current and future acreage needs based for three types of parks typically found within a parks system. The current and 2015 acreage needs are calculated by multiplying the recommended acres per 1,000 population by the current and 2015 population estimates obtained from the US Census Bureau. The current and 2015 acreage deficit/surplus is calculated by subtracting the acreage needs from the existing acreage for each park type. As depicted in Table 6.5, deficiencies exist within the Pender County parks system for each of the three park types. Again, these surplus/deficit calculations are simply a benchmark to compare the system’s inventory with the recommendations set by the NRPA; actual park acreage needed within the parks system for the county varies by the user demand. Additionally, as mentioned earlier in this section, the NRPA does not have an application standard for acreage recommendations for special use parks, natural resource areas and preserves, and greenways and trails, and thus these park types were omitted from Table 6.5.

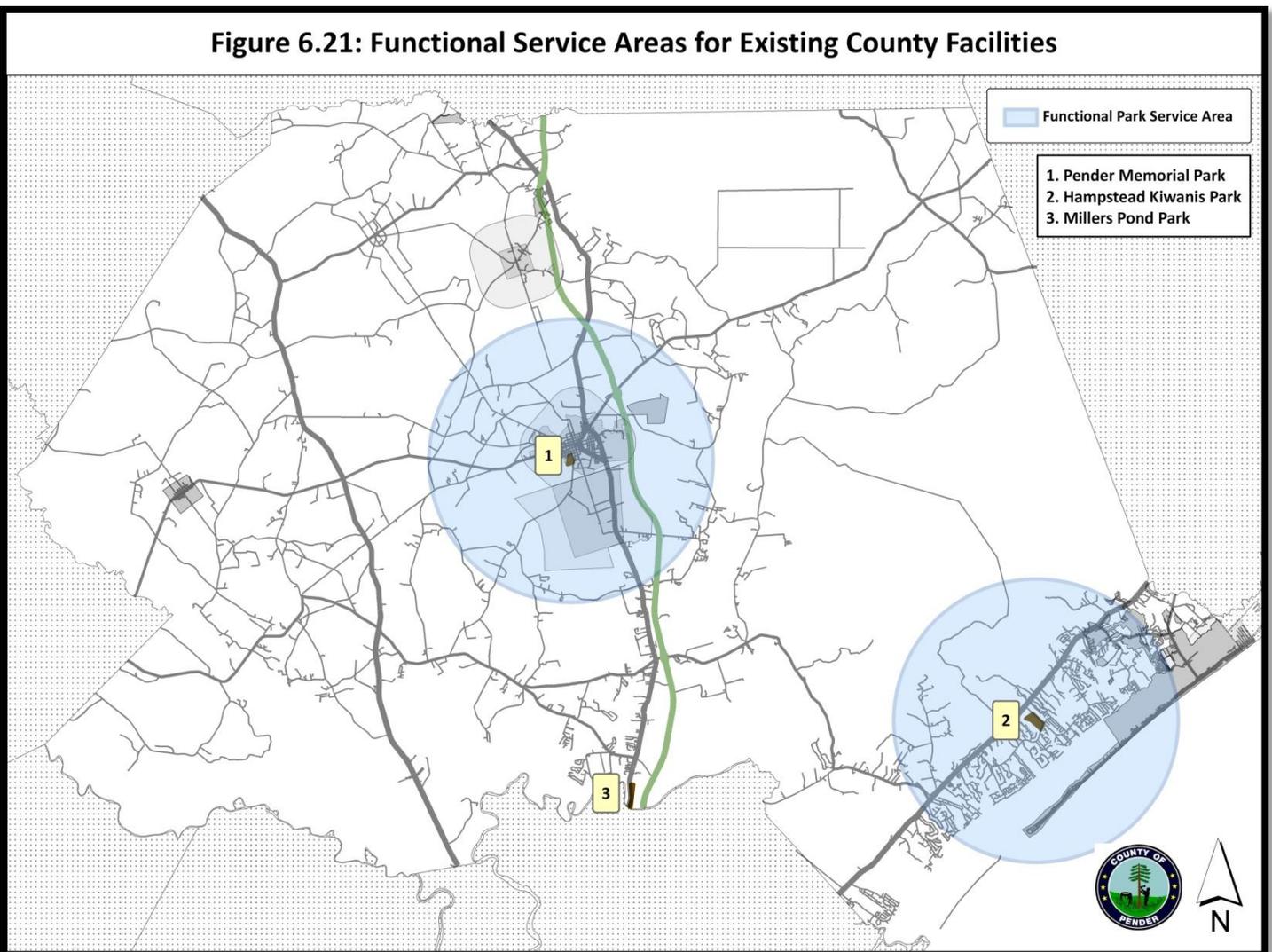
<b>Table 6.5: Pender County Parks and Recreation Acreage Surplus/Deficit</b>						
	<b>Existing Acreage</b>	<b>Recommended Acres per 1,000 Population</b>	<b>Current Acreage Need Based on Estimated 2010 Population (55,237)</b>	<b>Current Acreage Deficit/ Surplus</b>	<b>2015 Acreage Need Based on Estimated 2015 Population (63,479)</b>	<b>2015 Acreage Deficit/ Surplus</b>
<b>Mini-Park</b>	0	0.25 to 0.5	13.8 to 27.6	<b>-13.8 to -27.6</b>	15.9 to 31.7	<b>-15.9 to -31.7</b>
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>	0	1 to 2	55.2 to 110.5	<b>-55.2 to -110.5</b>	63.5 to 127.0	<b>-63.5 to -127.0</b>
<b>Community Park</b>	109.5	5 to 8	276.2 to 441.9	<b>-166.7 to -332.4</b>	317.4 to 507.8	<b>-207.9 to -398.4</b>
<b>Regional Park</b>	0	5 to 10	276.2 to 552.4	<b>-276.2 to -552.4</b>	317.4 to 634.8	<b>-317.4 to -634.8</b>
<b>Totals</b>	109.5	11.25 to 20.5	621.4 to 1,132.4	<b>-511.9 to -1,022.9</b>	714.1 to 1,301.3	<b>-604.7 to -1,191.8</b>
<b>Population Estimate Data Source: US Census Bureau (www.census.gov)</b>						

## Existing and Planned Park Classifications and Service Areas

After reviewing the existing parks in the county and their facility inventories, the parks were given classifications based on the NRPA-recommended guidelines as overviewed in Table 6.1. Pender County currently oversees three existing parks, comprised of two community parks and one natural resource area, and Table 6.6 shows the recommended park classifications.

Park	Classification
Pender Memorial Park	Community Park
Hampstead Kiwanis Park	Community Park
Millers Pond Park	Natural Resource Area

Table 6.6 displays the three existing county parks and their NRPA-recommended service areas. While the NRPA standard service radius for community parks is one mile, due to the rural population and large area of the county, this radius is more likely to be around 5 miles for Pender County. Figure 6.21 displays the location of the three parks and their functional service areas. As observed in Figure 6.21, the service areas covered by the three existing parks leaves a vast majority of the county left out of a service radius of an existing facility. Severe deficiencies exist in the western area of the county, including the population centers of Currie and Penderlea, as well as the Maple Hill area in the northeastern area of the county. Additionally, the Scotts Hill and Brown Town areas are also underserved. The populated area of Rocky Point is another area with a severe deficiency of parks and recreation facilities. While Millers Pond Park is indicated on Figure 6.21, the lack of active recreational amenities limits the service provided to the Rocky Point area. Additionally, the NRPA does not indicate a recommended service area for parks classified as natural resource areas.

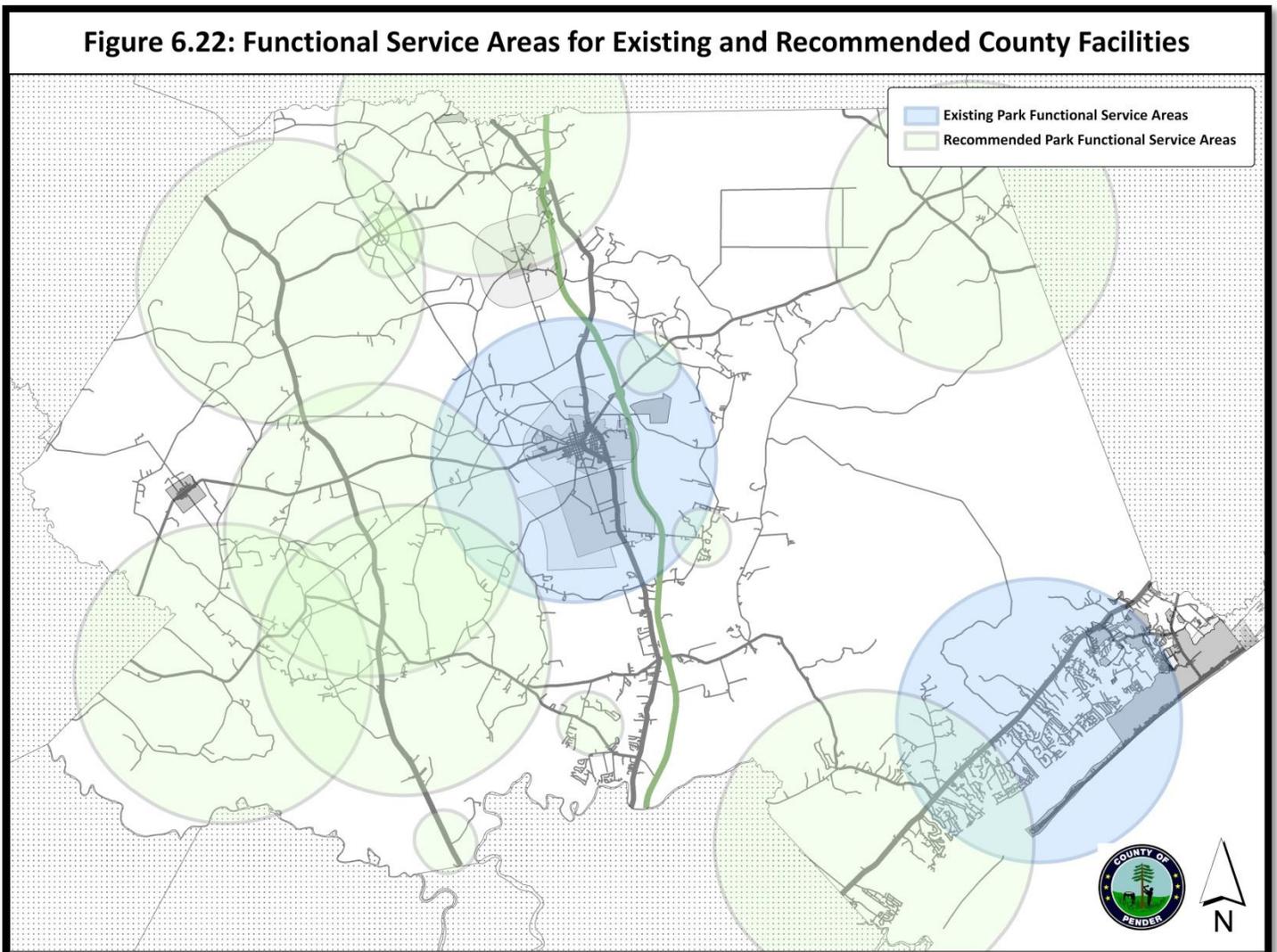


### Service Areas for Recommended Parks

As displayed in Figure 6.21, the majority of the county's area remains outside of the functional service areas of the existing facilities within the Pender County parks system. The majority of the county's populated areas are not served by public parks and recreation facilities, leaving large service gaps within the system.

Figure 6.22 below displays the existing parks' functional service areas, as well as the functional service areas for the projects recommended in this plan. As depicted in Figure 6.22, the development of the recommended projects will alleviate the majority of the existing service gaps in the county, leaving only small gaps in geographic areas that are not particularly densely populated, or areas that are currently served by municipal parks and recreation facilities. While the NRPA standards indicate a service radius of  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  miles for neighborhood parks, a service radius of 1 mile is more appropriate for Pender County due to the geographic distribution of populated areas.

Additionally, the service radius of the recommended Rocky Point Regional Park is not portrayed on Figure 6.22. The NRPA-recommended service radius for regional parks is one hour driving time, and the location of the recommended regional park can be accessed easily within one hour from anywhere within Pender County. As such, the functional service area for the recommended Rocky Point Regional Park covers Pender County entirely. The service gap in the Rocky Point area that appears on Figure 6.22 will be alleviated with the development of Rocky Point Regional Park.



## General Park Evaluations, Observations, and Recommendations

### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Access to parks and recreation facilities for disabled patrons should be examined at existing facilities and incorporated into new projects and renovations. Access for persons with disabilities is a large issue facing parks and recreation providers, and legislation requires that primary park amenities be free from barriers. The US Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (ATBCB) defines primary access routes in the following excerpt from the “Recommendations for Accessibility Guidelines: Recreation Facilities and Outdoor Developed Areas”:

*Outdoor recreation access routes are the paths that connect the primary developed spaces and elements that are basic to the recreation experience being offered at the site. For example, the outdoor recreation access routes at a picnic ground are the paths linking the parking area, restrooms, picnic units, and water hydrants. While many of these elements – parking area, restroom, and water hydrant – are not the primary reason for a person to visit the site, they are basic developed elements that serve all visitors. Designers and managers, in consultation with users, must determine which of the developed activities and elements at a recreation site are basic to the recreation experience being offered. Further, they must secure that there is a comprehensive system of outdoor recreation access routes that connect all primary elements and spaces with each other and with accessible parking spaces and facility entrances. This determination should be based upon visitor expectations as well as the level of development at the site.*

While the ADA regulations for design standards seemingly have room for interpretation when applied to some parks facilities, the requirements are very specific in regards to restroom and pathway design. While Hampstead Kiwanis Park provides for adequate ADA accessibility, Pender Memorial Park struggles to offer any pedestrian interconnectivity, let alone ADA accessibility; a pedestrian and ADA renovation plan should be created to improve pedestrian interconnectivity and ADA accessibility within Pender Memorial Park. Prior to renovation of old facilities or new facility development, the parks and recreation department should seek counsel from the county attorney and/or ADA compliance staff to review and interpret the ADA requirements to ensure that new projects and renovations are able to be enjoyed by all users. Accessibility should be examined at the existing parks and accessibility plans should be created.



**Image 6.13: Existing parks should be evaluated for ADA-accessibility and compliance; future parks and amenities should incorporate designs to enable use by persons with disabilities.**

Table 6.7 is a checklist developed to serve as a tool to evaluate a facility’s accessibility for people with disabilities. The checklist has been created based on the *Checklist for Existing Facilities version 2.1*, as revised in August 1995 by the Adaptive Environments Center, Inc. for the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. The complete checklist may be found at <http://www.ada.gov/racheck.pdf> . These questions in Table 6.7 should be considered when planning new facility development or existing facility renovation.

**Table 6.7: ADA Accessibility Checklist**

**Parking**

- Are parking spaces available for individuals with physical disabilities?
- Are parking spaces near the building entrance?
- Are parking spaces easily accessible to the front entrance by a level or ramp path at least 4 feet wide and free of obstruction?
- Is the surface of the parking lot smooth and firm, but not slippery?

**Route**

- Is the surface of the parking lot smooth and firm but not slippery?
- Are walks leading to the facility level or nearly so?
- Are there curb cuts at crosswalks?

**Entrance**

- Are walks leading to the facility level or nearly so?
- Are there curb cuts at crossways?
- Is at least one primary entrance usable to individuals who use wheelchairs?
- Do all doorways have a clear opening of at least 32 inches?
- Are doors operated by a single effort?
- Is the door light enough for a person with a disability to open it?

**Ramps**

- Are sharp inclines or abrupt changes in level avoided at thresholds?
- Are ramps provided where there are stairs?
- Do ramps conform to the standard of not more than 1:12 slope?
- Do ramps have non-slip surfaces with a 32 inch handrail on at least one side?

**Bathrooms**

- Do all bathroom doors provide a minimum of 32 inches of clear opening?
- Is the bathroom floor the same level as the floor outside of the bathroom?
- Does the bathroom contain a floor clearance area of at least 5 feet by 5 feet to permit a person in a wheelchair sufficient turning space?
- Is there at least one bathroom stall usable by people in wheelchairs?
- Are sinks, mirrors, and dispensers usable by people in wheelchairs?
- Are there handrails in the toilet and shower area?
- Is there sufficient turning and maneuvering space in the bath for a wheelchair?
- Are hanging rods for clothing located within 48 inches of the floor?

**Miscellaneous**

- Do public telephones have volume control devices?
- Are TTYs available?
- Are water fountains available and have a clearance of 28 inches?
- Are tables convertible to wheelchair use with floor clearance of 28 inches?
- Is the meeting space accessible and usable by persons with disabilities?
- Are all common areas accessible to all people?
- Is help available for those who might need assistance?
- What is the general attitude of personnel towards persons with disabilities?

*Derived from the Checklist for Existing Facilities Version 2.1, Adaptive Environment Center, Inc., 1995*

## **Playground Safety Standards**

Several organizations have established safety standards for playground equipment, including the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), and the International Play Equipment Manufacturers' Association (IPEMA). These organizations' proposed standards are designed to serve as a guideline to assist in creating atmospheres that are safe and minimize the potential for injury.

Various materials on the market that are utilized in playground equipment have been measured for their performance in regards to safety, and guidelines have been established by the aforementioned agencies. Existing and future facilities should be evaluated to examine whether their equipment achieves the safety guidelines.

## **Vandalism**

Although not expressly predominant during the individual facility assessments, vandalism is a common problem in parks. Graffiti is an ordinary problem in most parks, although at this time not a significantly prevalent problem in the Pender County Parks. Regardless, most parks and recreation departments across the country have a zero-tolerance policy for graffiti, meaning that any area vandalized with graffiti must be painted over within 24 hours of a report. It is recommended that Pender County adopt a similar zero-tolerance policy.

Other recommendations may be implemented to reduce problems from vandalism and other illicit behavior. Additional lighting may be practicable, as well as clearing out thick vegetative growth to improve visibility into and around the parks. Careful thought should go into sight planning to reduce low-profile areas that may be hiding or congregation areas for vandals and other criminals. Increasing visitor traffic by offering amenities for a diverse user group would produce an environment that would potentially cut back on criminal actions. Additionally, materials and construction methods used in the park facilities should be resistant to destruction to reduce the frequency of repair or replacement. Security cameras should be installed in park facilities that are experiencing frequent problems from vandalism, and park gates may be feasible at some facilities such as the planned Millers Pond Park.

## **Facility Design Standards**

By incorporating design standards for county parks and recreation facilities, a strengthened sense of community should occur and park recognition will be easier for visitors. Design guidelines and standards that may be considered include architectural, athletic amenity standards, general site amenity standards, site development standards, and signage and promotional materials standards.

### ***Architectural***

Implementing architectural standards will serve to create an identity for the built structures that exist within a park system. These architectural standards should include construction materials, roofing materials, paint colors, furnishings, and hardware selections. Additionally, by utilizing similar materials at all facilities within the park, maintenance and repair costs could potentially decrease as materials may be purchased in bulk for reduced quantities, and maintenance workers will require less time for repair duties because the workers will become more familiar with the materials and hardware.

### ***Athletic Amenity Standards***

The elements that make up athletic fields and facilities such as bleachers, fencing and gates, lighting, irrigation equipment, dugouts, basketball goals, spectator seating, and concession and restroom buildings should be standardized throughout the parks system. By using standardized features and amenities, the parks system's image is further strengthened by creating uniformity. Similar to the architectural standards, implementing athletic amenity standards could also potentially reduce development and maintenance costs by utilizing uniform equipment and systems.

### ***General Site Amenity Standards***

General site amenity standards include landscape planting, trash receptacles, lighting, playground equipment, and fencing and gates, and these standards are very cost feasible to implement. Utilizing similar site amenities additionally strengthens the parks system image and reduces development and maintenance costs.

## Site Development

When planning for new parks facilities, many factors should be considered in the site development. Several of these factors include:

- Orient and locate features and amenities as to maximize natural light and shade as applicable.
- Provide a balance of wooded and open areas.
- Ensure that amenities are located as to avoid offensive sounds and smells.
- Provide shaded areas along walking paths and in playgrounds.
- Locate restrooms in easily accessible and central locations within the park.
- Locate parks along proposed trails and greenways.
- Separate incompatible activities and locate compatible activities within close proximity.
- Minimize use of pavement and reduction in tree canopy and natural vegetation.
- Utilize native plants to minimize maintenance and also attract indigenous wildlife.
- Design park and included amenities into the natural landscape to avoid vegetation removal, grading, and soil compaction.
- Utilize self-sufficient features such as solar-powered lights and solar-heated water for restroom facilities.
- Ensure picnic areas are naturally or artificially shaded from late-morning until around 5:00 pm.
- Utilize pervious pavers and minimize and disconnect impervious surfaces to reduce stormwater volume and pollutant concentration.
- Utilize stored stormwater from ponds and rain barrels for irrigation.
- Utilize materials and colors that mimic the natural surroundings.

Some additional factors should be considered when designing parking lot layouts:

- Utilize natural topography and existing soil conditions to avoid grading and soil compaction.
- Ensure adequate landscaping is provided to minimize the visual impacts of large parking areas.
- Incorporate stormwater best management practices such as bioswales and retention areas into landscaping.
- Use right-angled parking for increased space efficiency.
- Provide overflow parking on permeable pavers, stable turf, or lawn areas.

## Signage and Promotional Materials Standards

Signs within and near parks serve an invaluable purpose by providing directions, park identification, and general information. As such, careful thought should be applied to where and how signs are located, as well as their design. All county parks should utilize similar sign designs to create an identity for the parks system. A uniform design should be created for all new parks facilities. The existing signs at Pender Memorial Park and Hampstead Kiwanis Park greatly differ, and the parks system image may be strengthened by replacing these existing signs with the new uniform design as more parks are developed within the county. Additionally, signs should be placed on nearby roads to alert potential users of the existence of each park, as well as directions to the park.

Promotional materials such as park maps and brochures should also be created for the existing parks and all future facilities, and utilize a uniform design. A great example is the brochure/park map for each park in the North Carolina State Parks system, in which the brochure for each park has unique content but designed using a similar layout.



**Image 6.14: Park signs serve to welcome park visitors and provide information. Utilizing uniform signs for all future parks will increase departmental branding.**

## Facility Recommendations

The facility expansions and improvements, new county-managed facilities, and county-partnered or supported facilities recommended in this plan were developed based on a variety of information and criteria, including existing service areas, existing park acreage, existing facilities, NRPA-based guidelines, public input, existing county-owned property, user demand, existing and projected population trends, and other factors.

Overall, the recommendations were created to plan for new facilities that will provide a variety of recreational opportunities to meet a broad spectrum of users in many areas of the county, and include a total of three park expansions, one mini-park, five neighborhood parks, seven community parks, one regional park, four new county-partnered facilities, a variety of bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and new public water access areas to the Intracoastal Waterway, the Black River, Moores Creek, and Rockfish Creek. Each of these new facilities is recommended for development in order to alleviate the current deficits that exist within the county's parks system, and provide an improved quality of life to the residents and visitors of Pender County.

### Recommended Park Expansions and Improvements

Public parks are considered fluid facilities and should be in a constant state of assessment for expansions and improvements. Both Hampstead Kiwanis Park and Pender Memorial Park incrementally developed, and as such, problems exist in both parks that may be remedied through the creation of a master plan that will address issues specific to each park. Additionally, the acquisition or lease of specific properties adjacent to existing facilities should be pursued for expansion of the existing parks.

#### Pender Memorial Park

While Pender Memorial Park offers many softball/baseball fields, a playground, picnic area, and soccer fields, the recreational amenities offered within the park cater to a limited user group. Additionally, the park was developed over the years without the benefit of a long-range vision, and the result is a park with severe limitations for pedestrian interconnectivity, ADA-accessibility, and adequate parking and drive areas. Pender Memorial Park also features some wetland areas that have restrictions on development as pursuant to the Clean Water Act.

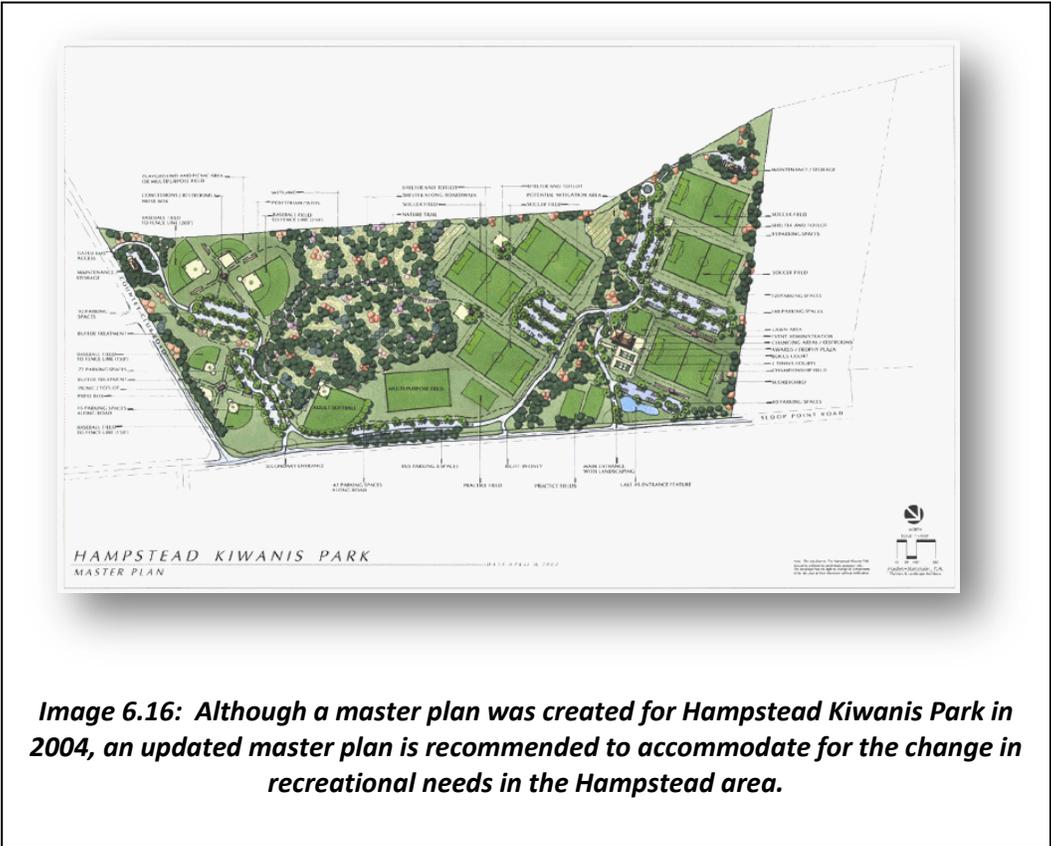
It is recommended that staff develop a park renovation and expansion master plan to address these issues, including ADA-compliance and accessibility, pedestrian interconnectivity, parking and driveway improvements, stormwater management, facility renovations, and additional amenities. Because of the park's location within the Town of Burgaw, it is recommended that a partnership be pursued between the county and the town to work together for future expansion and improvements, as Pender Memorial Park caters to residents both within and outside of the town's boundaries.



***Image 6.15: The development of Pender Memorial Park has created restrictions for pedestrian interconnectivity, ADA-accessibility, parking, and other issues that may be addressed through the creation of a park renovation and expansion master plan.***

### **Hampstead Kiwanis Park**

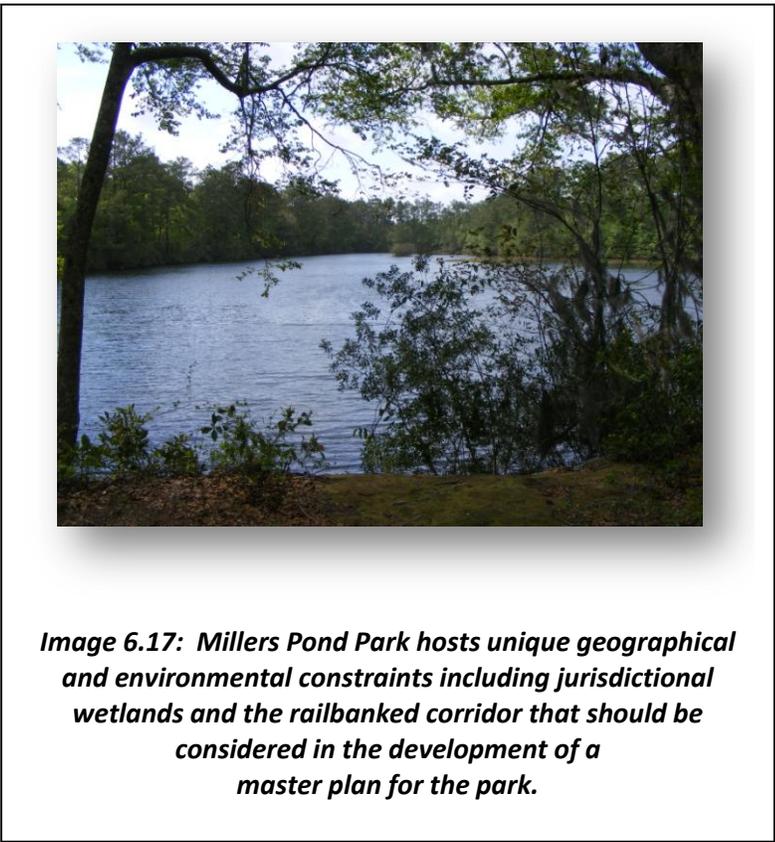
Although a master plan was created for Hampstead Kiwanis Park, it is recommended that staff develop a park renovation and expansion master plan that incorporates the existing and future phases to address issues including overall layout, landscaping, pedestrian and vehicle interconnectivity, stormwater management, facility improvements, ADA-compliance and accessibility, and potential expansion and additional amenities. Focus should also be given to a streamlined and user-friendly amenity reservation system that would lessen conflicting uses and overbooking. Additionally, the relationship between Pender County Parks and Recreation and the Hampstead Kiwanis Park Board should be revisited and evaluated to ensure that future development, management, and maintenance of Hampstead Kiwanis Park is amenable for all parties involved.



**Image 6.16: Although a master plan was created for Hampstead Kiwanis Park in 2004, an updated master plan is recommended to accommodate for the change in recreational needs in the Hampstead area.**

### **Millers Pond Park**

Due to the unique geographical and environmental constraints at Millers Pond Park, there are limitations to developable areas and recreational uses of the park. However, a master plan should be developed for the facility that depicts the overall built-out concept and probable phasing. Consideration should be given to the rail corridor that serves as the eastern boundary of the park, as it is likely that this corridor will be utilized in the future for passenger and freight rail use. As such, the master plan should include adequate safety measures to keep park visitors from straying onto and near the corridor, as well as provide significant buffers to maintain the natural serenity that the park currently offers. Additionally, the resurrection of the rail line will require the development of a new railroad trestle over the Cape Fear River; it is recommended that Pender County partner with New Hanover County and the Wildlife Resources Commission to lobby for the new trestle to include a bicycle and pedestrian lane. This would allow users of the WRC-managed public boat access area and nearby residents and visitors a safe method to cross the river to access and enjoy Millers Pond Park.



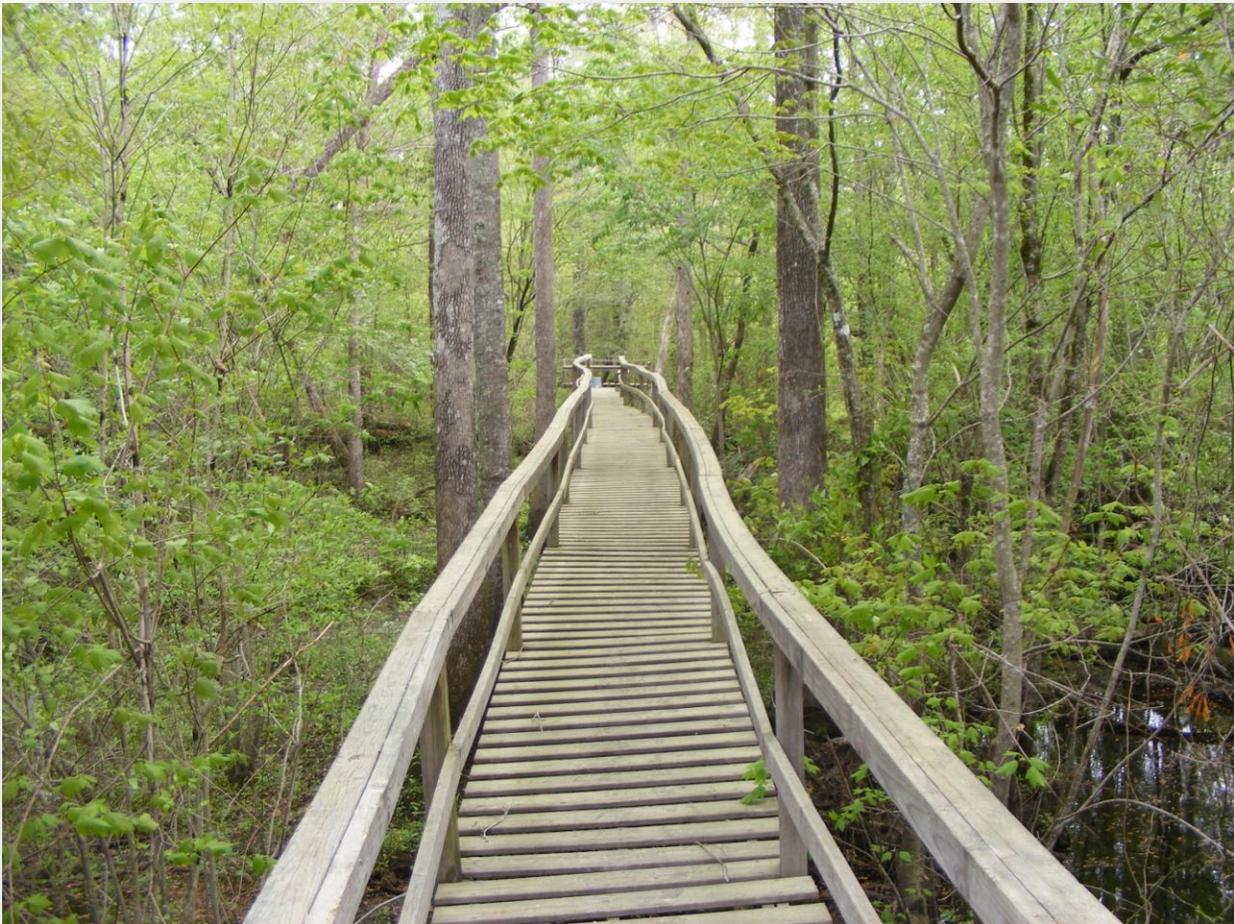
**Image 6.17: Millers Pond Park hosts unique geographical and environmental constraints including jurisdictional wetlands and the railbanked corridor that should be considered in the development of a master plan for the park.**

## Recommended New County-Managed Facilities

Several new county-managed facilities are recommended in this plan to address the deficiencies that exist in Pender County's parks system. Some of these recommended facilities are site-specific, while others are recommended in an area or community but a specific site is not chosen.

It is recommended that as each new county-managed facility is planned and developed, public input meetings be held in the community near the planned facility so that Staff may solicit further input from residents on the proposed amenities within the facility. Following the public input solicitation, a master plan for the facility should be created which should be followed by the engineered design of the facility and subsequent field work. Future phases of each facility should be representative of the master plan design, and all existing and planned facilities should be evaluated during the 5-year plan update or as necessary as the parks and recreation needs of county residents will change over time.

The following pages overview the recommended new county-managed facilities, but not in a prioritized order. Following this plan, Planning Staff will work with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to create a prioritization system and rank the recommended projects. Project priorities should be evaluated at least on an annual basis as budget, development, and recreational need conditions change.



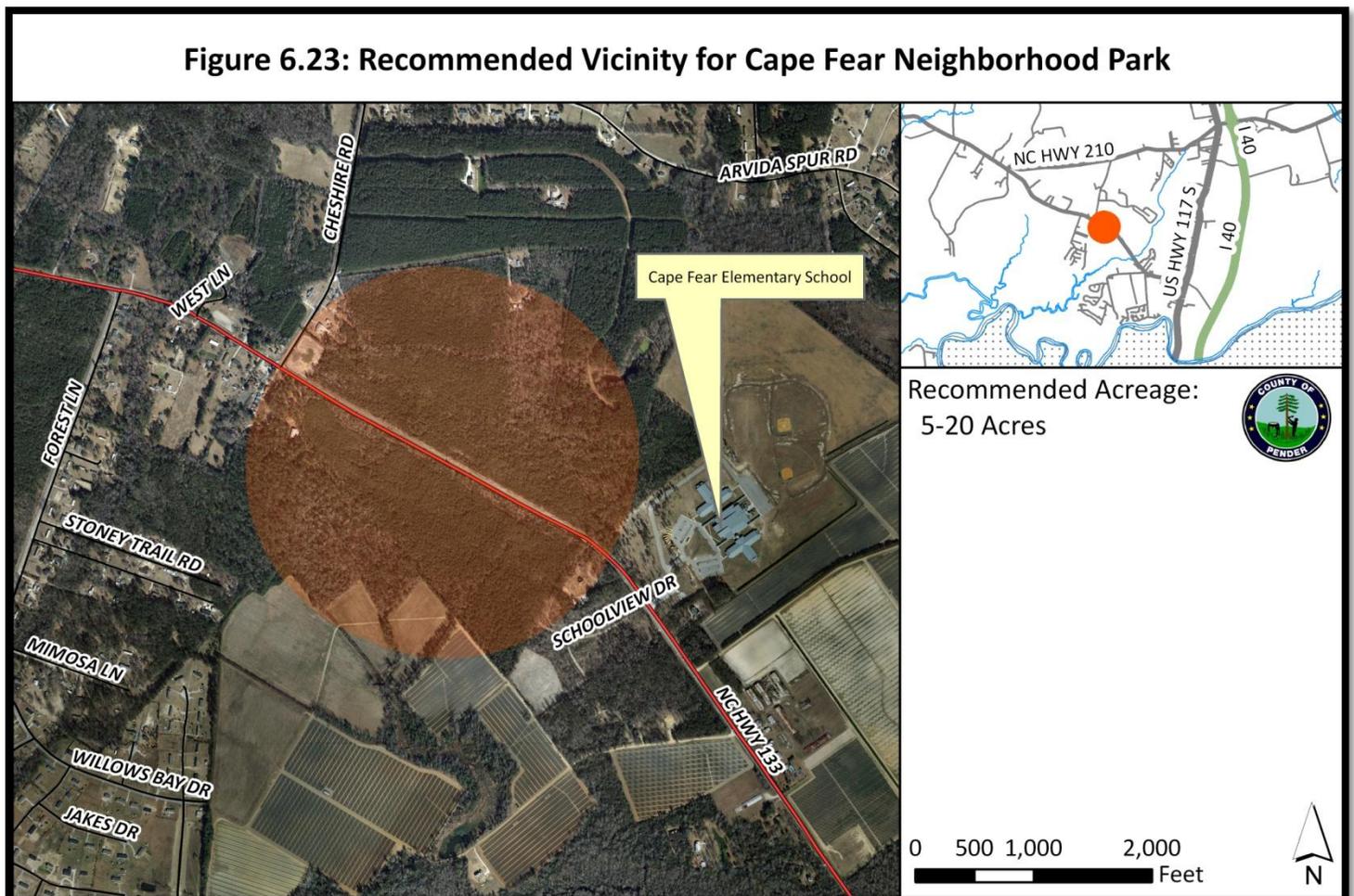
***Image 6.18: Several new facilities are recommended on existing county-owned parcels such as the Long Creek Community Park, which features an existing boardwalk in a pristine setting for access to Long Creek.***

### Cape Fear Neighborhood Park

Cape Fear Neighborhood Park is a 5-20 acre park recommended for development near Cape Fear Elementary School, east of Rocky Point on NC Highway 133. There are several privately-owned vacant and undeveloped parcels within walking and bicycling distance from the school that would be suitable sites for the Cape Fear Neighborhood Park. Based on the input received from the public input meeting in Rocky Point, as well as the survey results for zip code 28457, suitable amenities for the Cape Fear Neighborhood Park should include passive recreation amenities including walking trails, natural areas, and picnic shelters, and active recreation amenities including a playground area and softball and basketball facilities.

Development of the Cape Fear Neighborhood Park will help to alleviate some of the existing deficiencies within the county's parks system. As shown in Table 6.5, the county's park system has a current acreage need of 55 to 110 acres for neighborhood parks; this is based on the NRPA recommendation of 1 to 2 acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 county residents. As the county's population increases, the acreage deficits will also increase; based on the 2015 population estimate for Pender County, the county should have between 63.5 and 127 acres of neighborhood parks within the parks system by 2015. Additionally, the amenities developed with the Cape Fear Neighborhood Park will help reduce the facility deficits depicted in Table 6.4.

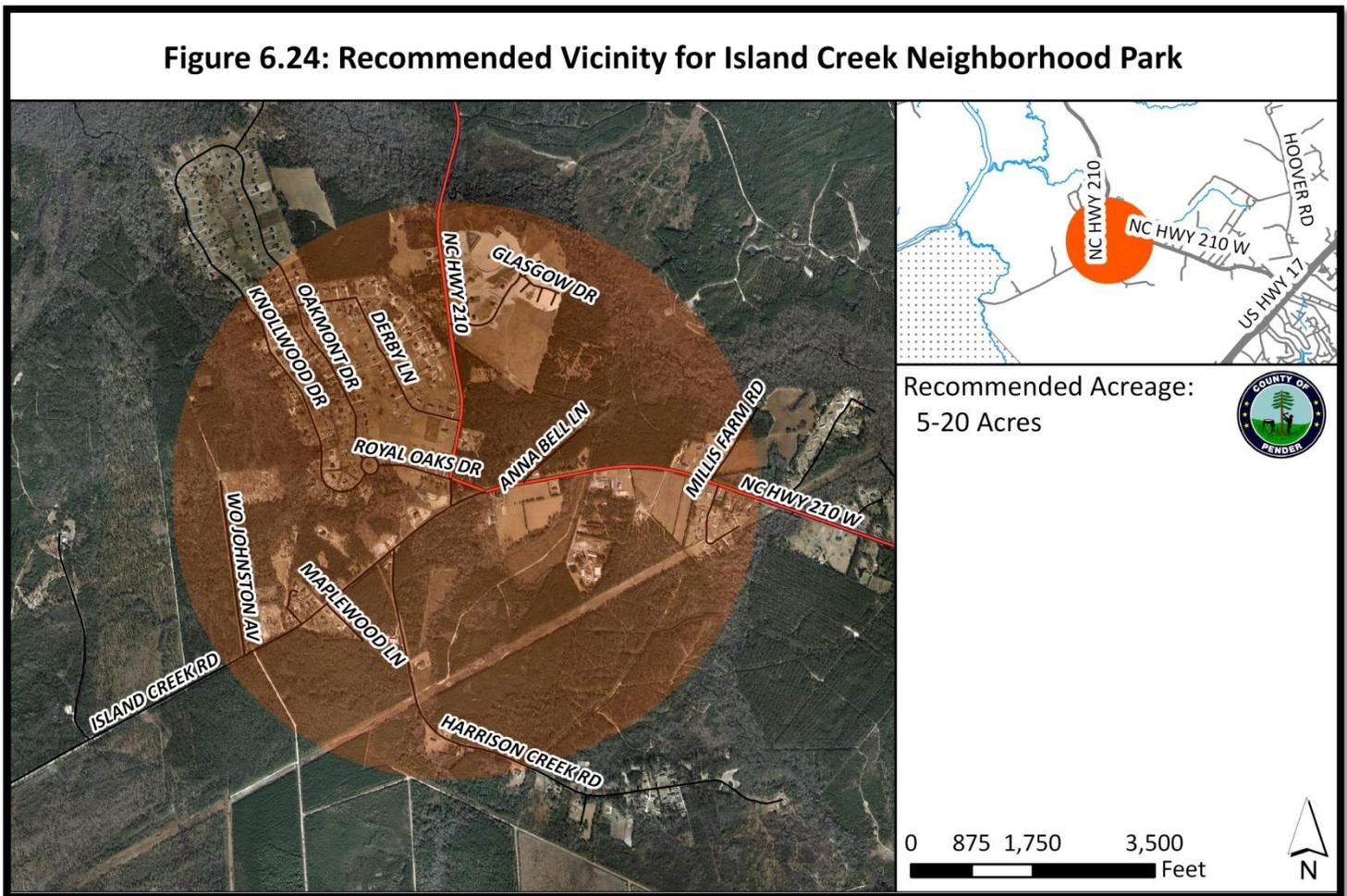
Figure 6.23 below shows the recommended vicinity for the Cape Fear Neighborhood Park. Rocky Point and the surrounding areas are poised for substantial residential development in the near future; an example of this development is the 21-unit subdivision currently under development across from Cape Fear Elementary School. As previously mentioned, it is important to appropriately plan for population increase in the county to accommodate the increased parks and recreation demand.



### Island Creek Neighborhood Park

Island Creek Neighborhood Park is a recommended new county-managed park recommended as a 5 to 20 acre park in the vicinity of the intersection of NC Highway 210 and Island Creek Road, as depicted in Figure 6.24 below. This park should be located within easy bicycle and pedestrian access to the Coastal Pender Greenway, as this greenway and Island Creek Road would serve as a pedestrian and bicycle link between the City of Wilmington’s planned Blue Clay Corridor bicycle facilities and the planned Town of Surf City’s bicycle facilities. This park is also situated along NC DOT Bicycle Route 3, and could serve as a rest stop for bicyclists traveling the route. Island Creek Road and a portion of NC Highway 210 bisect the zip codes 28443 and 28457; however, the desired facilities indicated on the public input survey by respondents in the two zip codes are very similar. Suitable amenities for the Island Creek Neighborhood Park include walking trails, natural areas, picnic areas, playground equipment, and softball and basketball facilities. Development of Island Creek Neighborhood Park and the subsequent amenities will help to ease park acreage and facility deficits, as well as provide recreational opportunities to another area of the county situated for strong residential growth.

**Figure 6.24: Recommended Vicinity for Island Creek Neighborhood Park**



### Long Creek Community Park

The county-owned parcel identified as PIN 2295-04-6767-0000, situated at the terminus of Montague Road at NC Highway 210 is a 22.23 acre parcel suitable for the recommended Long Creek Community Park. Pender County acquired this parcel in 2003 through the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Acquisition Program, in which funds appropriated from the Stafford Act were used to acquire properties in areas prone to hazards such as flooding.

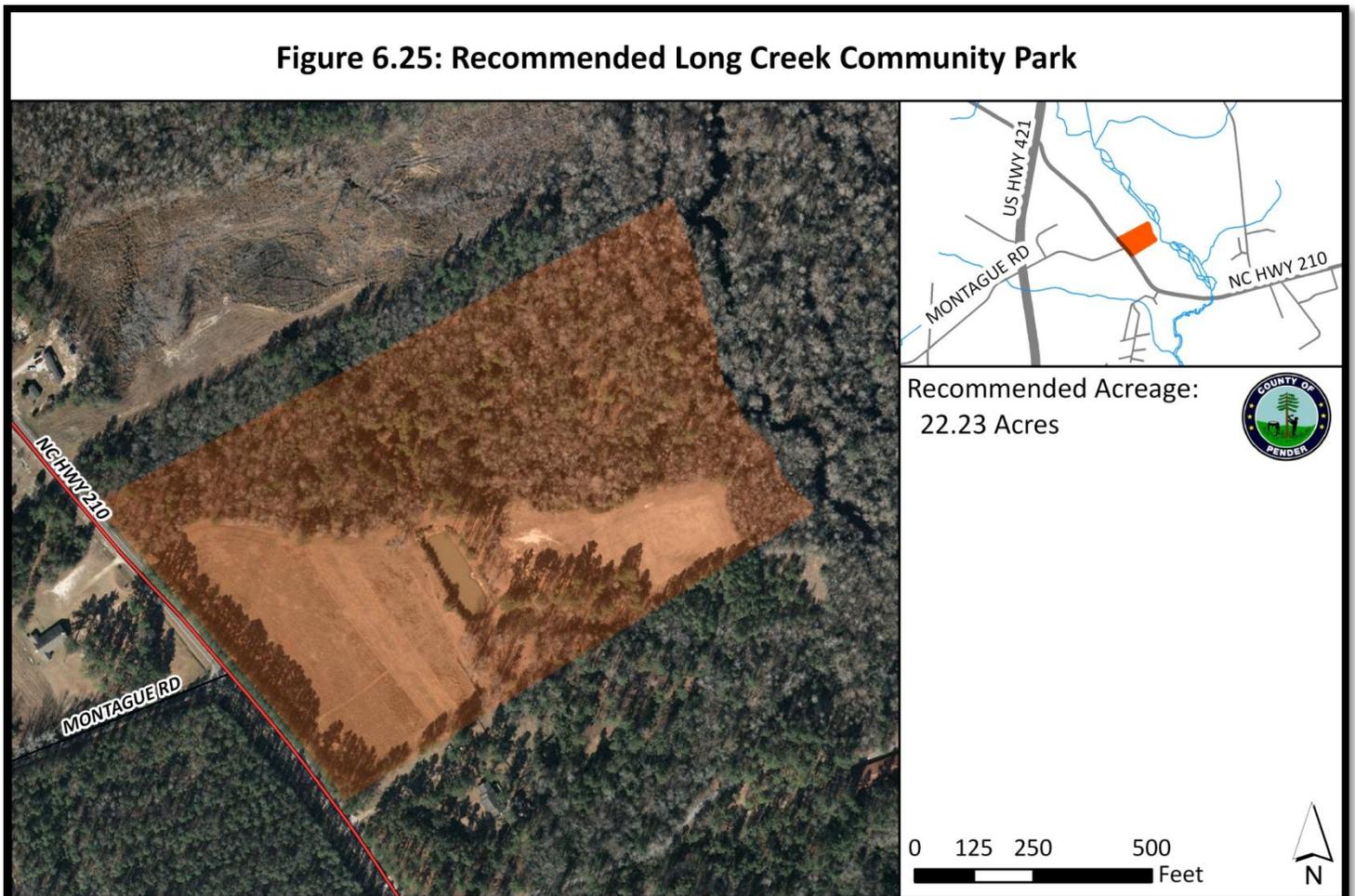
Pursuant to the deed restrictions and covenants, there are limits to the uses allowed on properties acquired through the Hazard Mitigation Acquisition Program. The restrictions for this subject parcel, recorded under Book 2148, Page 098 at the Pender County Register of Deeds, state that the parcel must be dedicated and maintained in perpetuity for uses

compatible with open space, recreational purposes, or wetlands management practices. The development of structures on the parcel are limited to public facilities that are open on all sides and functionally related to a designated open space or recreational use, a public restroom, or a structure that is compatible with open space, recreational, or wetlands management usage and proper flood plain management policies and practices, which must be approved by the FEMA Director in writing prior to the construction of the structure. Structures built on the property must be located to minimize the potential for flood damage, be flood proofed, or be elevated to the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) plus one foot of freeboard. Allowable uses on the parcel are limited to open space, recreational, and wetland management uses, including parks for outdoor recreational activities, nature reserves, camping, unimproved, permeable parking lots, and buffer areas.

As depicted in Figure 6.25 below, the subject parcel is situated between NC Highway 210 and Long Creek across from Montague Road, which connects NC Highway 210 with US Highway 421. As such, the location of this parcel is ideal for access by the surrounding communities, including Rocky Point and Currie; Figure 6.25 displays the 5-mile radius functional service area for the park. The property is currently being utilized by private parties for kayak and canoe access to Long Creek, on which a motivated paddler could access the Northeast Cape Fear River and beyond.

Based on the desired facilities expressed by survey respondents from the 28457 and 28435 zip codes, in addition to the site-specific characteristics and restrictions, suitable amenities at the Long Creek Community Park include natural areas, picnic areas/shelters with permanent grills, public restroom facilities, walking trails, playground equipment, canoe/kayak access, fishing areas, and active recreational amenities including basketball and volleyball courts, baseball/softball fields, and soccer/multipurpose fields.

**Figure 6.25: Recommended Long Creek Community Park**

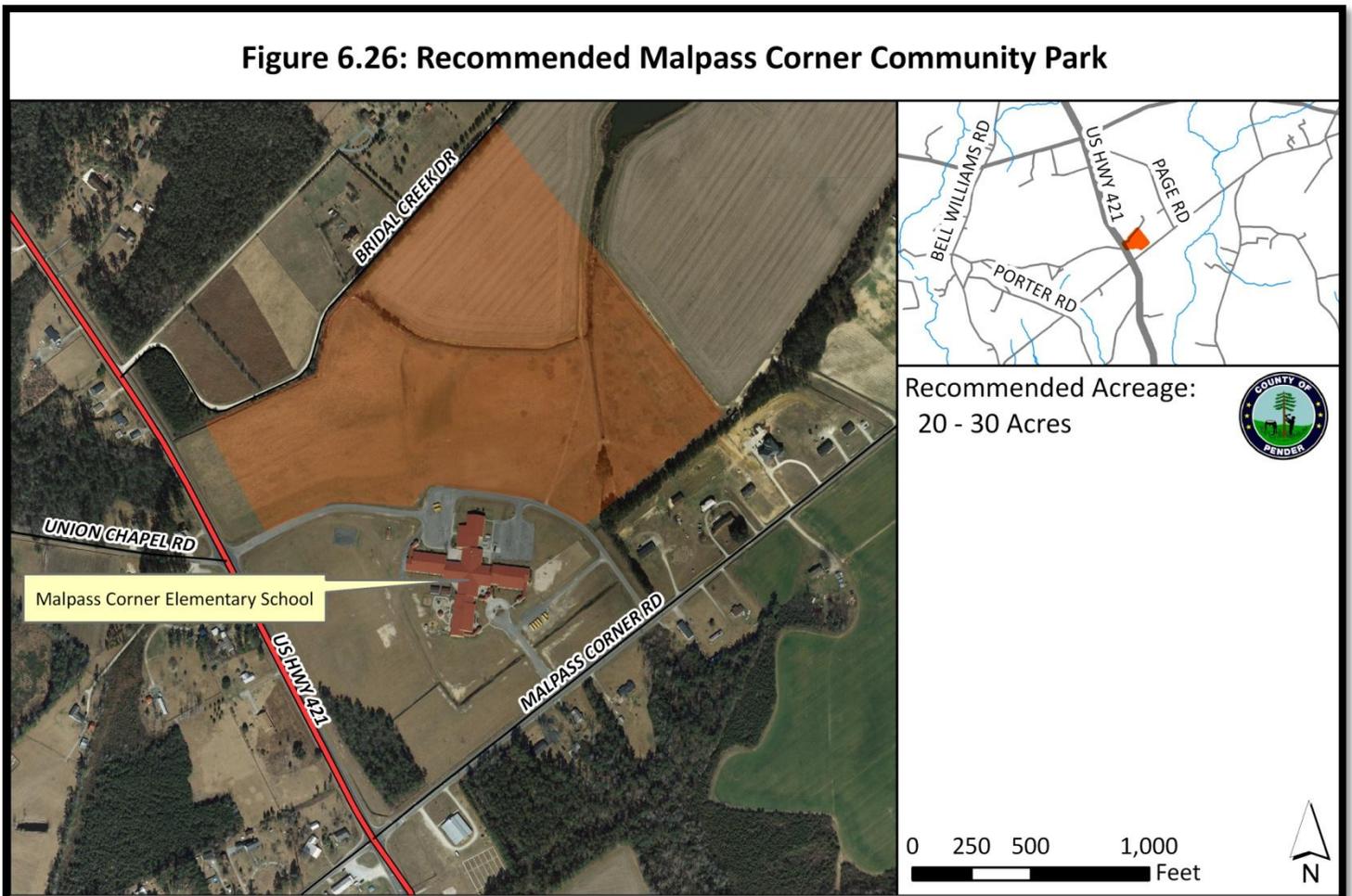


### Malpass Corner Community Park

The Malpass Corner Community Park is a new facility recommended to be developed adjacent to Malpass Corner Elementary School, at the intersection of US Highway 421 and Malpass Corner Road. The county-owned properties identified by PINs 2287-46-7776-0000 and 2287-45-8702-0000 total approximately 68.39 acres, with a portion of the tracts hosting the elementary school. The remaining acreage of the parcels is suitable for parks and recreation facility development, contingent on an environmental review of the properties. The location of the parcels is ideal for access by the surrounding communities, including Currie, Atkinson, Burgaw and St. Helena.

US Highway 421 divides zip codes 28425 and 28435, but based on the input received from the survey respondents in these zip codes as well as the information gathered at the Malpass Corner public input meeting, suitable amenities for this project include walking trails, picnic areas, playground equipment, and active recreational amenities such as basketball courts, volleyball courts, and other athletic facilities. Because of the proximity to the elementary school, planning and development of this project should include input from school staff, parents, and even students to determine the most desired and appropriate amenities to develop. This park should also be designed in a manner that limits park users from access to school grounds for safety and security reasons. Vehicle access points should be separate from the existing ingress and egress utilized by school staff and parents so that park and school traffic does not conflict.

Figure 6.26: Recommended Malpass Corner Community Park



### ***Maple Hill Community Park***

The Maple Hill Community Park is a recommended new 20 to 75 acre county-managed facility in the Maple Hill area. Though a specific site has not been determined, it is recommended that this facility be located in close proximity to the Maple Hill Resource Center, which will ensure that the new facility is within easy bicycle and pedestrian access from the Maple Hill residential community. Also, by locating the new community park near the existing community center, a shared use and management agreement may be pursued.

Despite the existing community center and recently created Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area, Maple Hill remains currently underserved by parks and recreation opportunities. As indicated by the survey responses and public input meeting that was held in the community, Maple Hill residents are eager to see more opportunities in their community. As overviewed earlier in this section, the existing community center building and recreational amenities are in need of improvements, and additional recreational acreage and facilities are needed in the area to decrease the deficits that exist in the county's parks system. While the new state-managed natural area will preserve a large amount of land as open space, the development of both passive and active recreational amenities within the natural area will be minimal, if any. Based on the projected population increase in the area as a result of the growth of the military installations in Onslow County, it is important to plan for providing recreational opportunities in the Maple Hill area. Additionally, due to the proximity of the Maple Hill community to Onslow County, the planning and development of the recommended new community park may be pursued as a partnership between Onslow and Pender Counties, as the new facility would serve residents of both counties.

Based on the input received at the public input meeting in Maple Hill and the survey results for zip code 28454, the amenities desired by the Maple Hill community include picnic areas and shelters, playground equipment, basketball courts, softball fields, bicycle paths, natural areas, walking trails, fitness trails, and multi-purpose fields, among others. The Maple Hill Resource Center property currently features an outdoor basketball court and softball field, both needing renovations and improvements. However, revitalizing these existing amenities and supporting improvements at the community building in addition to developing additional desired amenities would be more effective than duplicating efforts to develop the facilities desired by the community. As such, it is appropriate that new facilities be developed adjacent or in close proximity to the existing community center.

### ***Penderlea Neighborhood Park***

The Penderlea Neighborhood Park is a new 5 to 20 acre facility recommended in the Penderlea community, though a specific site has not been determined. Between Penderlea School Road and the terminus of Penderlea highway is approximately 12.5 county-owned acres that are suitable for park development, including an existing baseball field that could be incorporated into the new neighborhood park. Another feasible option is to develop the Penderlea Neighborhood Park in conjunction with the Penderlea Community Center, which is detailed later in this section.

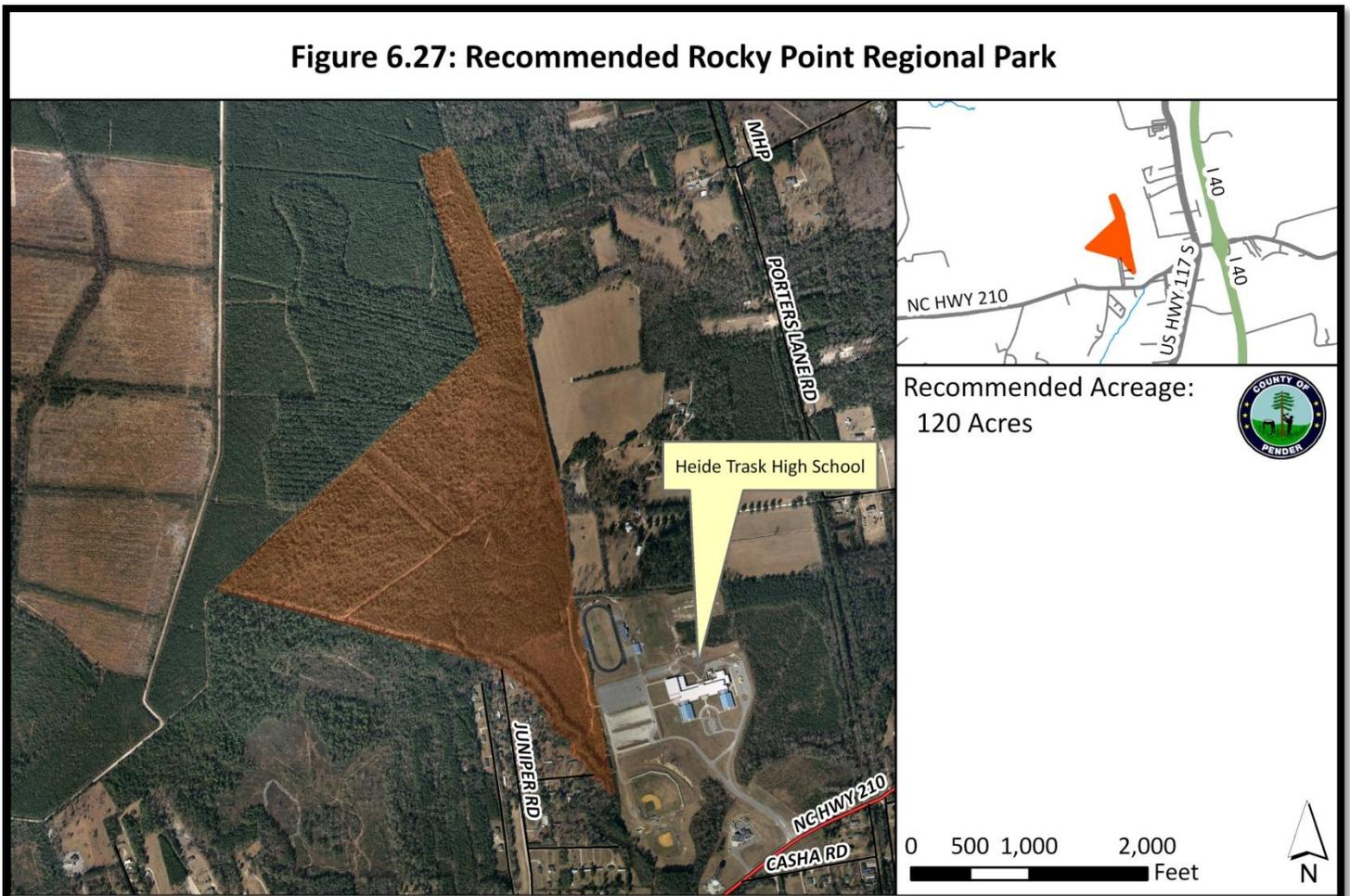
The facility desires expressed by the Penderlea community at the public input meeting and based on the input received from the zip code 28478 public input survey respondents include lighted tennis and basketball courts, softball and baseball fields, playground equipment, picnic areas/shelters, walking and fitness trails and other exercise-related amenities. Like other recommended new park facilities, more public input should be sought as planning for this neighborhood park progresses.

### Rocky Point Regional Park

Located adjacent to Heide Trask High School in Rocky Point, Rocky Point Regional Park is recommended as a large regional park that will have amenities that cater to a variety of parks users. The site is currently owned by the county, and is composed of approximately 120 acres suitable for parks and recreation facilities. The surrounding area is poised for significant residential and commercial development in the near future, and the development of Rocky Point Regional Park will serve to fill the deficiency of recreation opportunities in the Rocky Point area.

The development of Rocky Point Regional Park will help to lessen the deficiencies that currently exist in Pender County's parks system. The 120 acres of new park land will reduce the deficiency of park acreage in the county system, which is currently about 412 acres deficient based on recommended levels of service defined by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). The NRPA also recommends that a parks system should include from 5 to 10 acres of regional parks per 1,000 population; using the 2010 population estimate for Pender County of 55,237, the county is currently 276 to 552 acres below the recommended acreage for regional parks. The amenities developed within the park will help to reduce the facility-specific deficiencies in Pender County's parks system, particularly with various athletic fields and courts, walking and biking trails, playgrounds, and picnic shelters. Rocky Point Regional Park may also be a feasible location for a large indoor recreation center when budgetary support is available due to the availability of water and sewer capacity in the area.

Figure 6.27: Recommended Rocky Point Regional Park



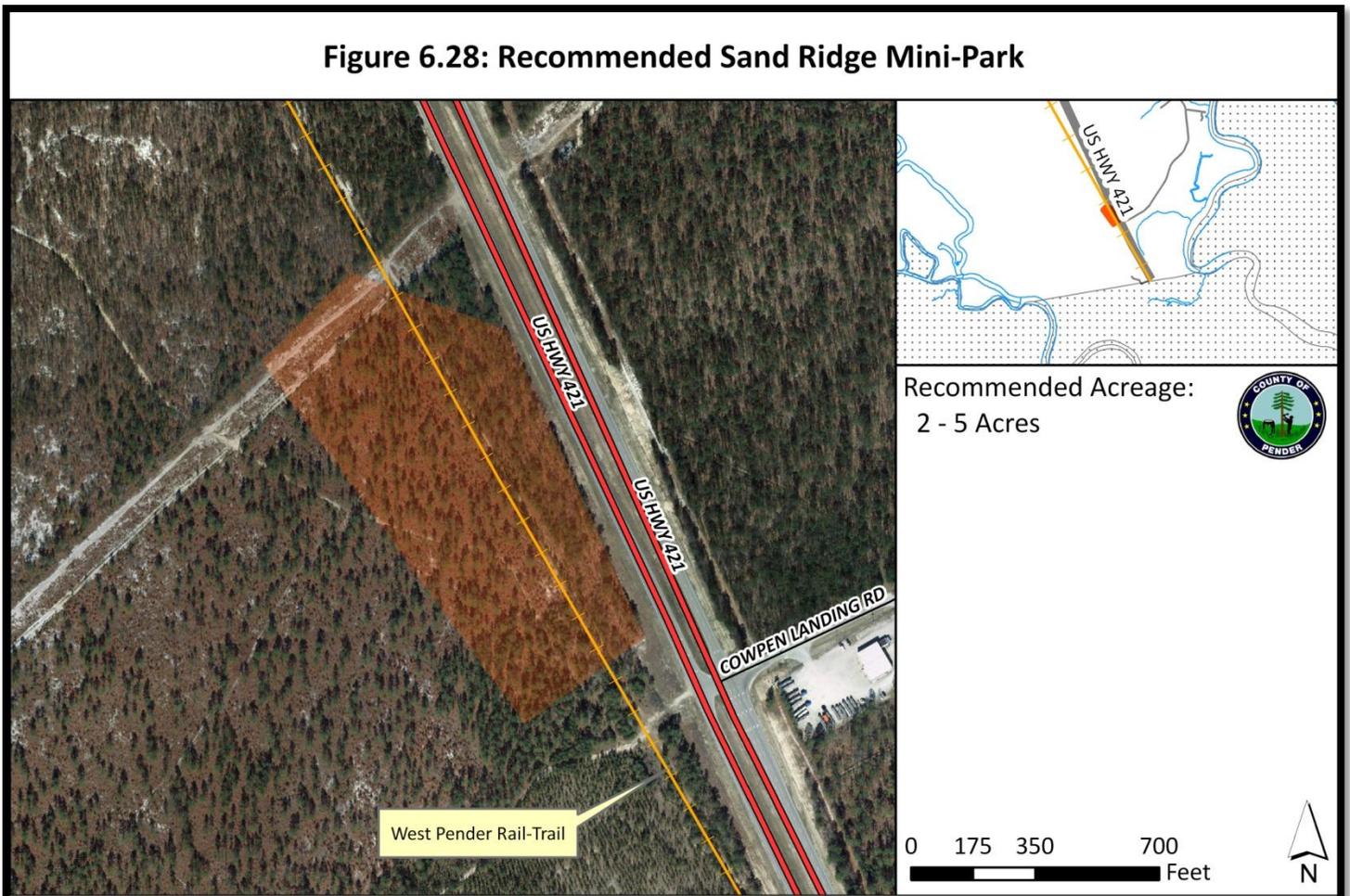
### Sand Ridge Mini-Park

Located within the Pender Commerce Park, the Sand Ridge Mini-Park is recommended primarily as a trailhead park for the West Pender Rail-Trail. This 2 to 5 acre facility should include limited amenities that are oriented to serve trail users as well as future employees of commerce park tenants, such as adequate parking for trail users, restroom facilities, picnic areas, benches, and playground equipment. Educational and informational materials and signage should be included to guide trail users.

During the creation of this plan, the Pender Commerce Park was still in the planning and design phases, with infrastructure including roads, sidewalks, and water and wastewater treatment facilities being drafted by the Pender County Department of Public Utilities. The development of the Sand Ridge Mini-Park should be concurrent with the development of commerce park, and adequate acreage reserved for this new facility at the northern portion of the parcel.

The Sand Ridge Mini-Park, named after the significant natural area called the 421 sand ridge, would not only serve as a needed trailhead for the West Pender Rail-Trail, but also as a draw to prospective commerce park tenants. According to *Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails, and Greenway Corridors; A Resource Book*, published by the National Parks Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, site locations near rivers, trails, and greenways are more attractive to prospective tenants than sites that lack such amenities. This is because the increased quality of life due to recreational amenities encourages employee fitness and well-being, resulting in lower absentee rates and decreased medical and disability costs. Additionally, greenways and trails help reduce the commuting costs for employees because they provide opportunities for commuting by foot or bicycle. In short, the recreational amenities recommended within and near the Pender Commerce Park will serve as a draw for prospective commerce park tenants.

**Figure 6.28: Recommended Sand Ridge Mini-Park**



### **Scotts Hill Community Park**

While the Hampstead Kiwanis Park offers limited recreational opportunities, the population growth that is projected for coastal Pender County and northern New Hanover County will exhaust the existing and planned facilities at Hampstead Kiwanis Park. As such, adequate parks and recreation development should be pursued in the coastal Pender area. The Scotts Hill Community Park is a recommended 20 to 75 acre park facility located along US Highway 17 in the Scotts Hill area.

Although a specific parcel has not been identified, there are several large, undeveloped tracts with access to US Highway 17 that would be ideal for the park. This project could coincide with the recommended Scotts Hill Intracoastal Water Way public

water access facility recommended later in this section, as the two projects would be mutually beneficial. Additionally, the recommended proximity of the Scotts Hill Community Park may yield a partnership with New Hanover County, as this park would serve residents in both counties.

While Hampstead Kiwanis Park provides recreational opportunities to the Hampstead area, the functional service area of the park excludes the Scotts Hill and surrounding communities. The development of the Scotts Hill Community Park would offer opportunities to these underserved areas, and also alleviate some of the competing and exhausting use of Hampstead Kiwanis Park. During the public input process for this plan, Hampstead area residents indicated frustrations with lack of available parks facilities and recreation programs in their communities, indicating at both the public input meeting and on the survey that they must travel to Wilmington so they or their family may enjoy a park or participate in recreation programs or classes.

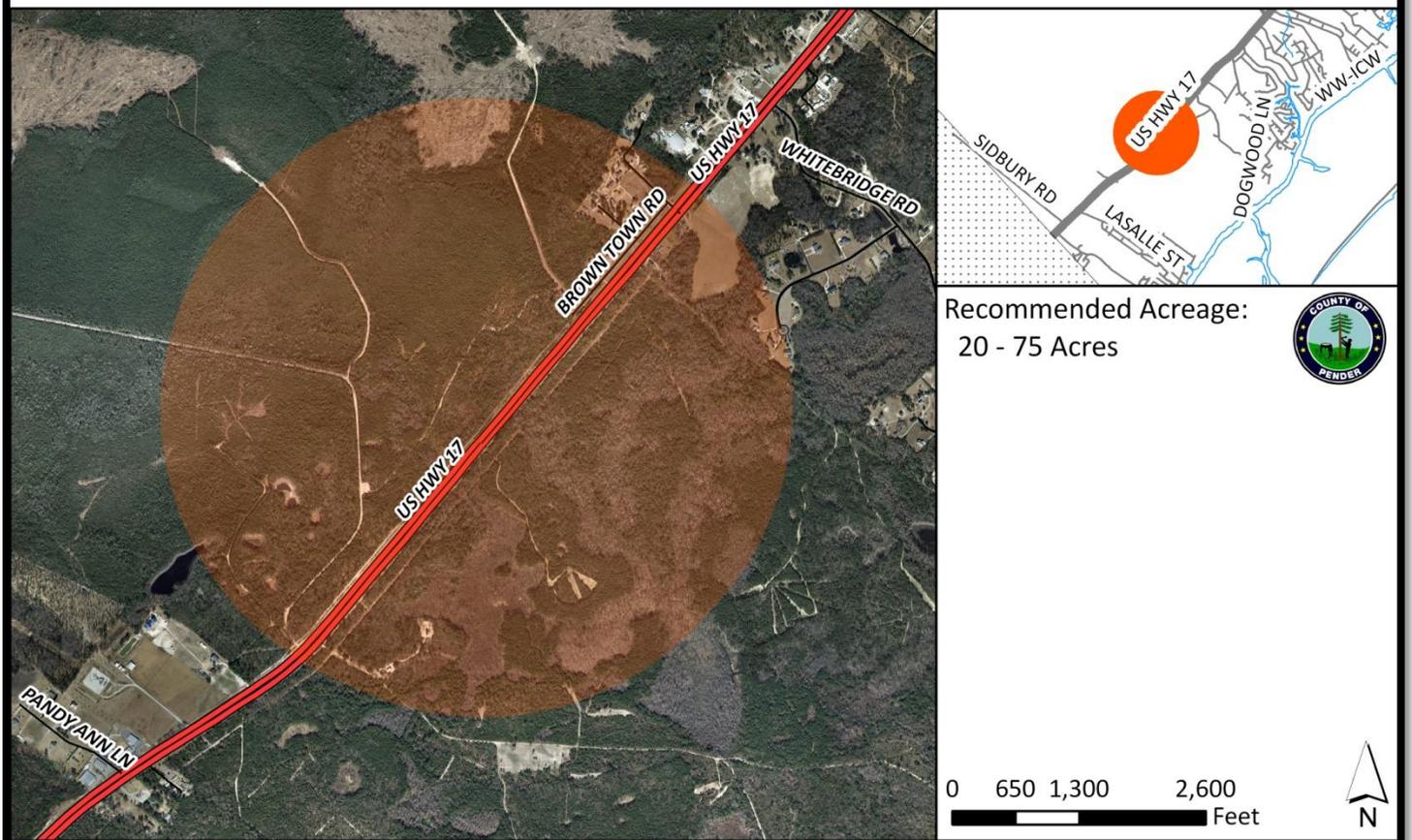
The Scotts Hill Community Park should include a variety of amenities that would offer recreational opportunities for county residents of all ages and interests. Athletic fields including basketball courts, baseball and softball fields, soccer fields, and tennis courts should all be included at the Scotts Hill Community Park, as well as other non-athletic amenities including playgrounds, picnic areas and shelters, nature and walking trails, and a dog park. This park may be a feasible site for a community center with a pool facility; these facilities were strongly desired by Hampstead community residents during the public input process, and developing these facilities at Hampstead Kiwanis Park is probably not feasible due to specific site conditions. However, the development of these facilities at the Scotts Hill Community Park would provide these opportunities to Hampstead area residents, as well as provide a venue for many revenue-generating programs and special events that would augment the development of the facilities and the parks and recreation budget in general.



***Image 6.19: While Hampstead Kiwanis Park offers recreational opportunities to Hampstead area residents, the projected population growth for the area will soon exhaust the existing park. Additional parks and recreation development will be needed in coastal Pender County to accommodate the population growth.***

The Scotts Hill Community Park site should be selected and developed so that it may be accessed by bicycles and pedestrians, as well as motor vehicles, including where feasible trail spurs to the Coastal Pender Rail-Trail, the Coastal Pender Greenway, Sidbury Road, and Island Creek Road.

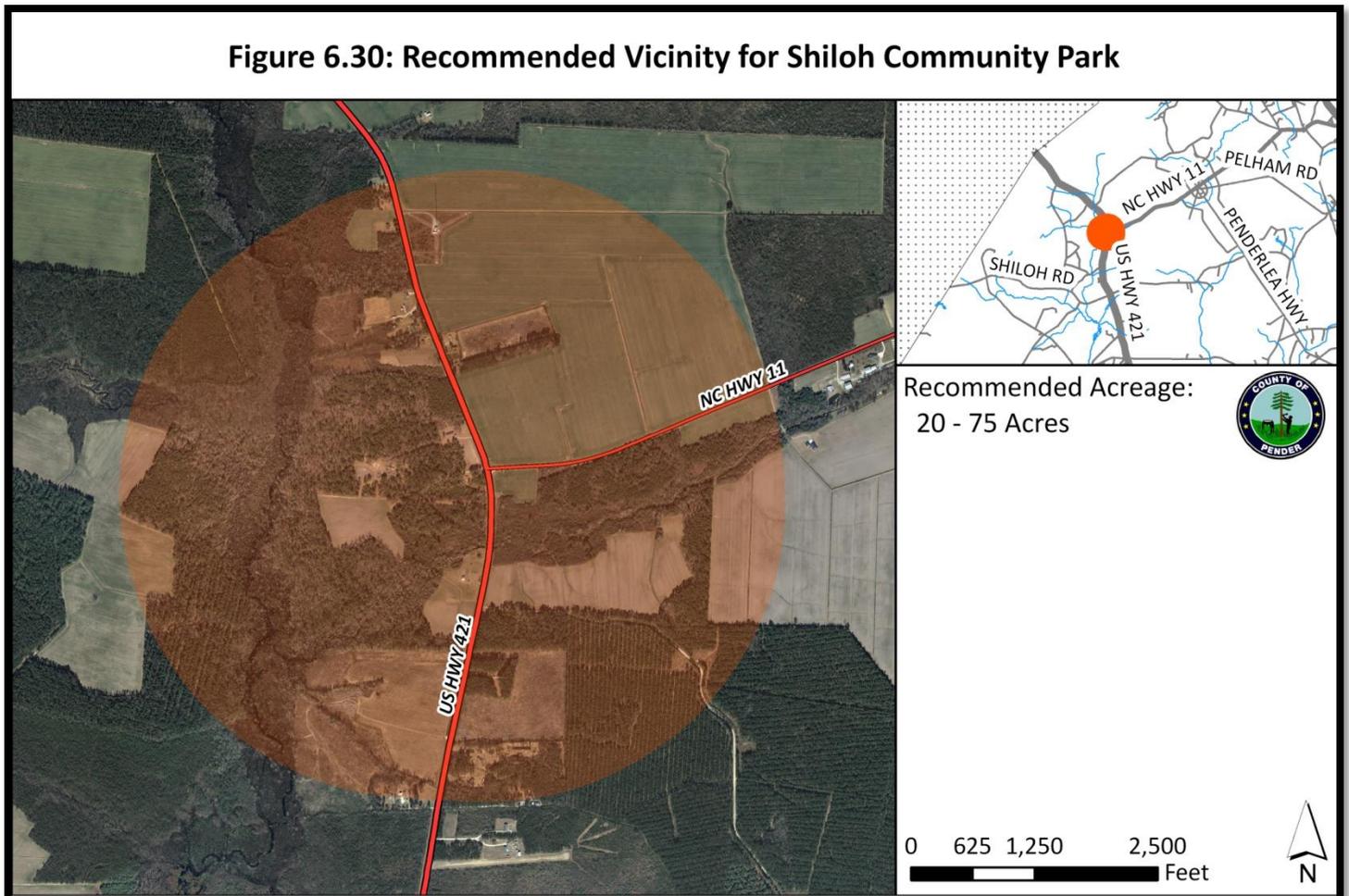
**Figure 6.29: Recommended Vicinity for Scotts Hill Community Park**



### Shiloh Community Park

Recommended to serve the needs of residents in northwestern Pender County, the Shiloh Community Park should be developed in the vicinity of the intersection of US Highway 421 and NC Highway 11. Though the surrounding area is currently mostly rural, a 20 to 75 acre community park in the future will be necessary to serve county residents as population increases. The suitable facilities at the Shiloh Community Park include athletic fields, walking trails, bicycle trails, picnic areas and shelters, and restrooms; the specific amenities developed at this site should be contingent on future public input and needs assessment during the park planning process.

Figure 6.30: Recommended Vicinity for Shiloh Community Park

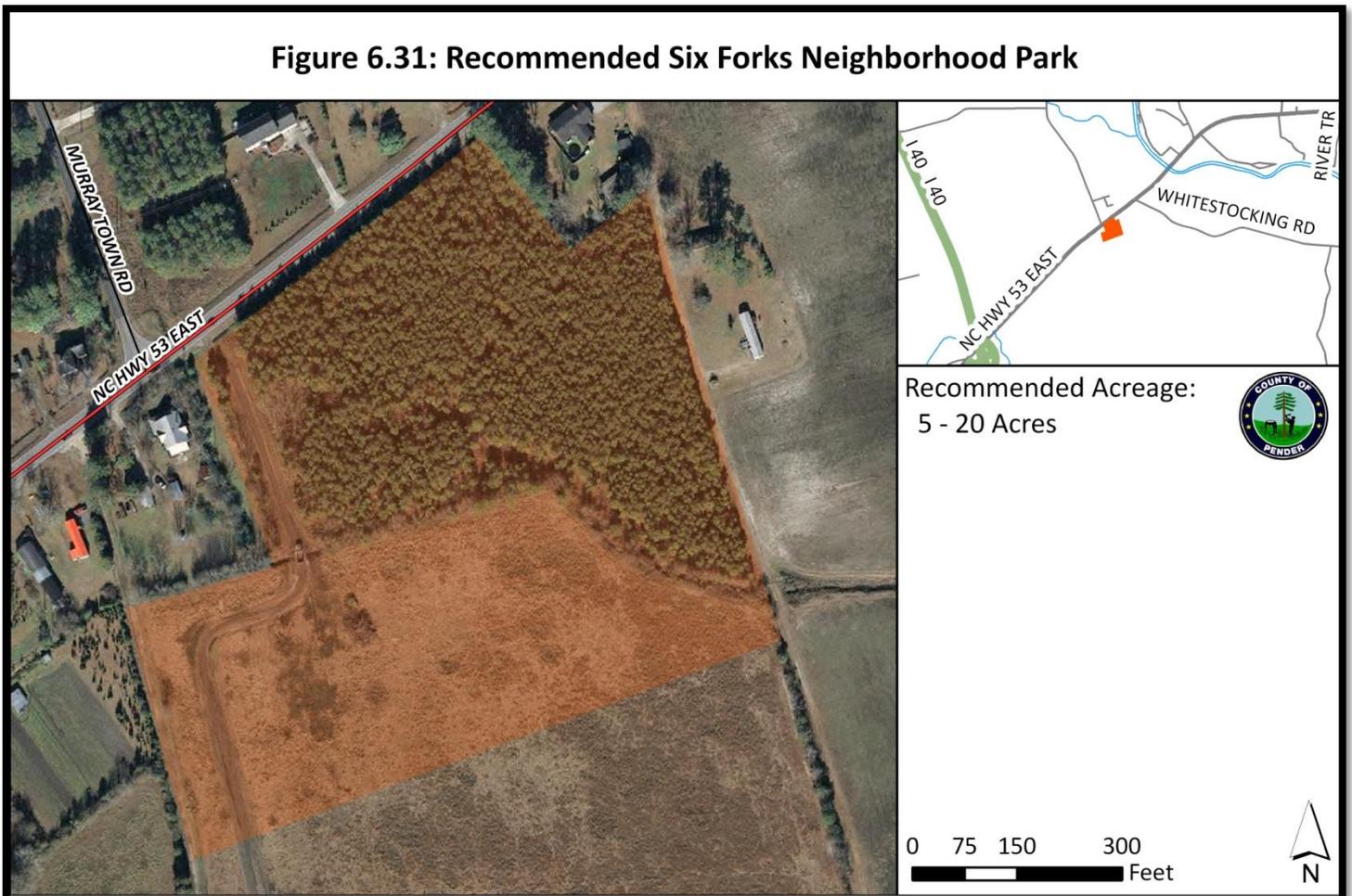


### Six Forks Neighborhood Park

On NC Highway 53 West, the Pender County Board of Education owns a 58.62-acre parcel just across from Murraytown Road that would be suitable for a 5 to 10 acre neighborhood park. According to communication with Board of Education Staff, the parcel may be utilized for the development of a bus garage and storage facility in the future, but plans for development are still being discussed. The Pender County Sheriff's Office currently has a lease on the property for the use of the southern portion of the parcel for an emergency services communication tower, and there are restrictions on what may be placed or developed in the tower's fall zone. However, the subject parcel's remaining acreage should provide ample room for the Board of Education's bus garage and storage facility as well as the recommended Six Forks Neighborhood Park.

The recommended neighborhood park should be designed to serve residents in a one to two mile radius, and feature amenities including picnic areas, playground equipment, a multi-purpose field, and walking trails. Due to this park's proximity to Pender Memorial Park, which is oriented to support organized athletic programs, the amenities developed at Six Forks Neighborhood Park should be limited to non-athletic oriented facilities and amenities. It is recommended that Pender County Parks and Recreation Staff work with Board of Education Staff to pursue the development of Six Forks Neighborhood Park in conjunction with the proposed bus garage and storage facility.

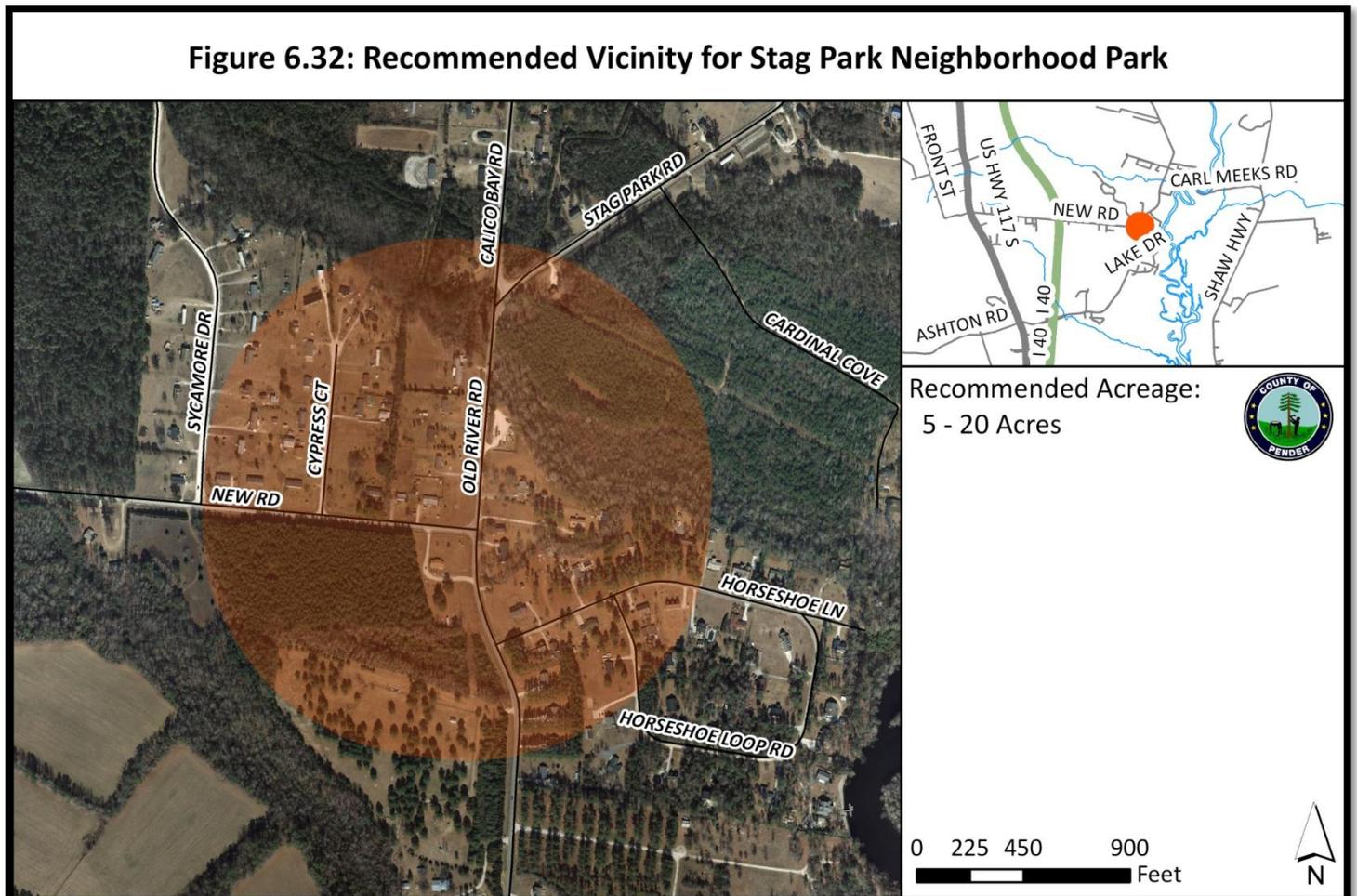
**Figure 6.31: Recommended Six Forks Neighborhood Park**



### Stag Park Neighborhood Park

Located east of St. Helena, the community of Stag Park is geographically isolated from the service areas of the existing and recommended parks and recreation facilities, as depicted in Figure 6.32. However, this area of the county currently hosts residential development, and development in this area will continue to be residentially focused. As such, it is recommended that a neighborhood park be developed in the community to provide parks and recreation opportunities to current and future residents.

Stag Park Neighborhood Park is recommended as a 5 to 20 acre park in the vicinity of the intersection of Old River Road and New Road. This location would allow for residents in the neighborhoods along Old River Road, Stag Park Road, and Sycamore Drive to enjoy a park close to their homes. Suitable amenities for this park include picnic areas/shelters, playground equipment, walking trails, and also athletic facilities as warranted by future additional public input meetings during the planning phase for the park.

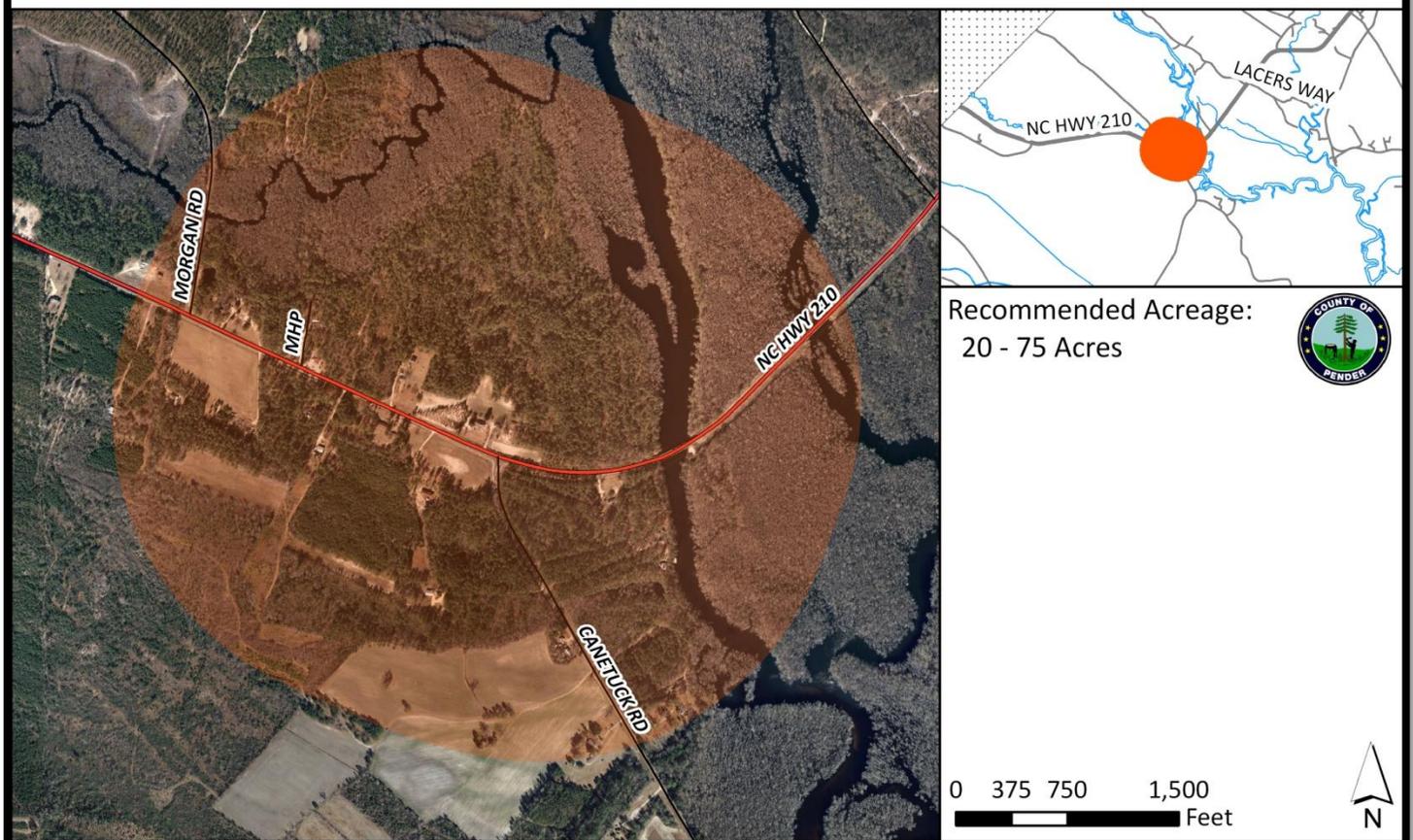


### Still Bluff Community Park

The Still Bluff Community Park is a 20 to 75 acre park recommended for development in the vicinity of the junction of NC Highway 210 and the Black River, near the intersection of NC Highway 210 and Canetuck Road. This park should be developed in conjunction with the Black River Water Access, as described later in this section. While some athletic amenities may be appropriate, site-specific conditions may limit development of such amenities due to possible presence of wetlands, depending on the site chosen. However, Still Bluff Community Park is recommended to fill a service area gap as depicted on Figures 6.21 and 6.22, and the specific amenities developed within the park are contingent on future public input from area residents.

The site selected for Still Bluff Community Park should be easily accessible from NC Highway 210 and have water frontage along the Black River. Several privately-owned parcels exist in the vicinity that may be suitable for the development of this project. Additionally, bicycle/pedestrian trail spurs should extend from the Still Bluff Community Park to nearby parks and recreation facilities, including the West Pender Rail-Trail, Moores Creek National Battlefield and Nature Center, and the Canetuck Community Center. Future county blueway and greenway plans should address water and bicycle/pedestrian interconnectivity of park and recreation facilities within Pender County.

**Figure 6.33: Recommended Vicinity for Still Bluff Community Park**



### *Willard Community Park*

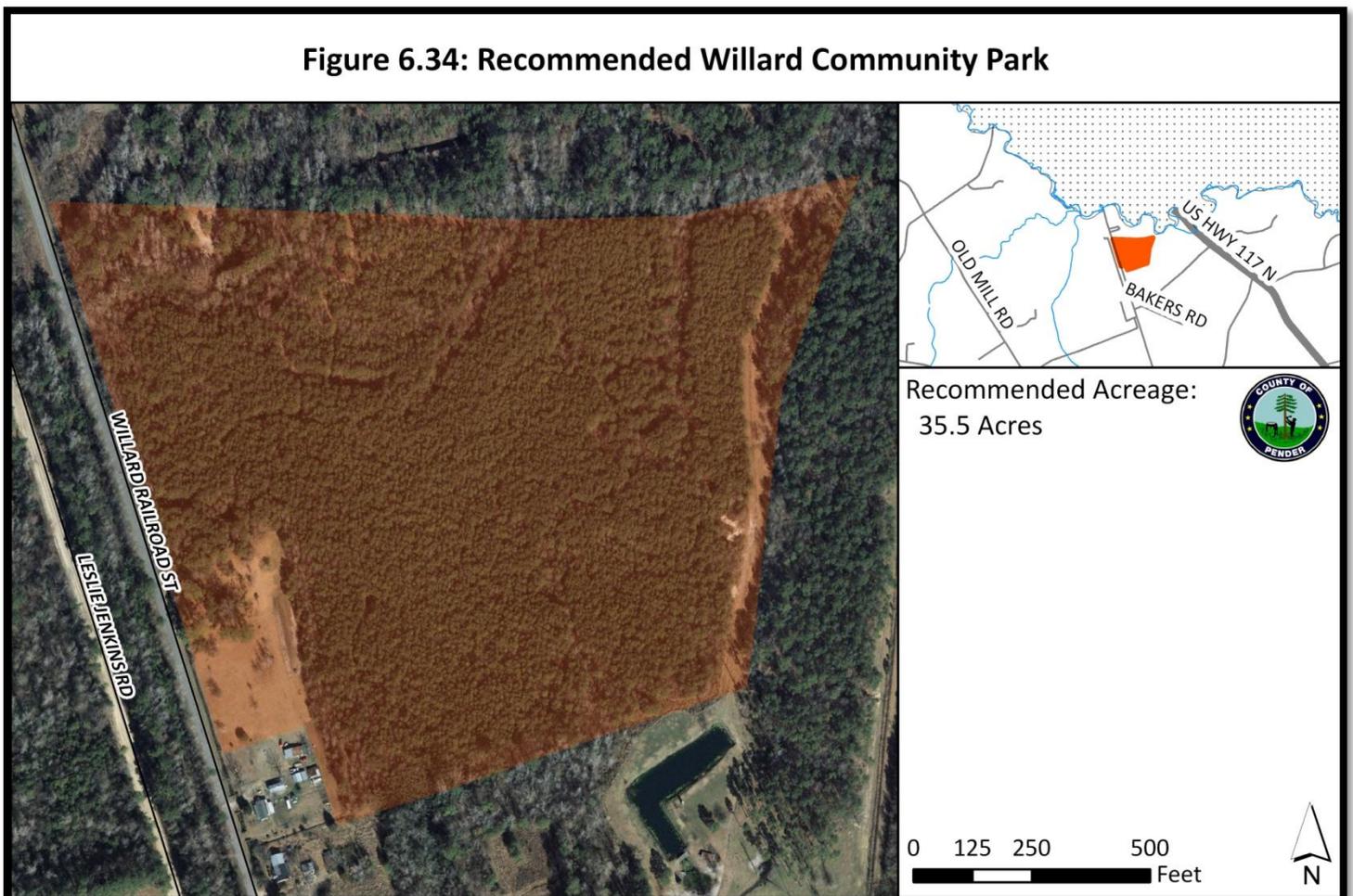
Located on Willard Railroad Street, the Pender County-owned parcel identified as PIN 3305-41-7624-000 is a 35.49 acre parcel recommended for the development of the Willard Community Park. This parcel was originally purchased under the Duplin County 2000 HMGP/CHAF Project, which used FEMA monies to purchase flood-prone parcels. The subject parcel was subsequently transferred from Duplin to Pender County, and has been under Pender County ownership since July 2003.

Similar to Long Creek Community Park as detailed earlier in this section, the parcel recommended for the development of Willard Community Park is limited by restrictive covenants as recorded at the Pender County Register of Deeds Map Book 1749, Page 029.

The Willard Community Park would provide recreational opportunities to the Willard and Watha communities, as well as the Town of Wallace and other southern Duplin County residents. As such, a partnership for park development may be feasible between the two counties and the Town of Wallace.

Suitable amenities for the Willard Community Park include youth and adult softball/baseball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, walking and nature trails, playground equipment, picnic areas and shelters, and public restrooms. This park should be developed in conjunction with the recommended Rockfish Creek Water Access described later in this section. While this parcel does not have frontage on Rockfish Creek, negotiations should be pursued with adjacent property owners to gain usage rights to allow for access to Rockfish Creek.

**Figure 6.34: Recommended Willard Community Park**

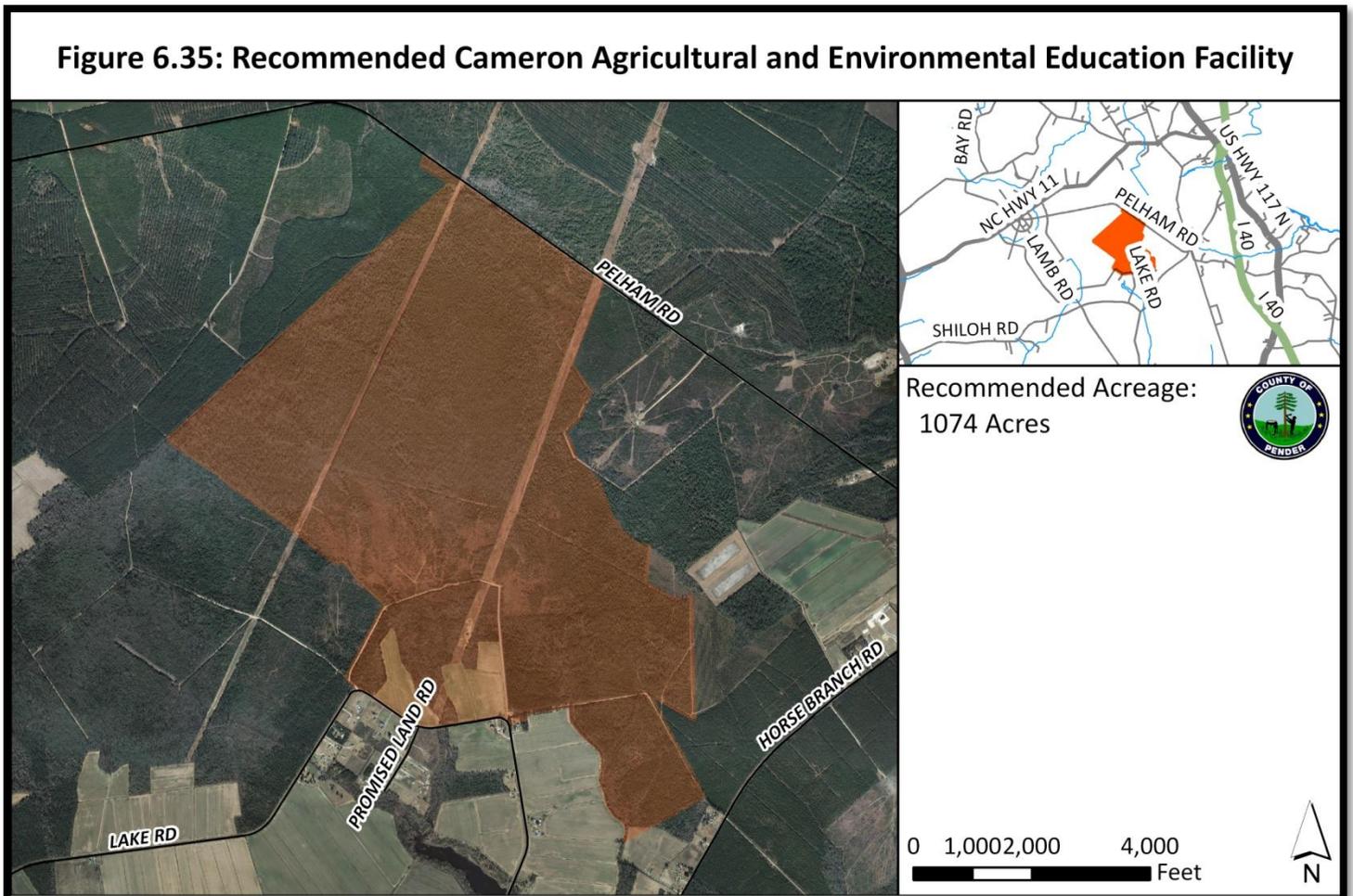


## Recommended New County-Partnered Facilities

### *Cameron Agriculture and Environmental Education Facility*

The Bruce Barclay Cameron Foundation currently owns several tracts totaling approximately 1074 acres west of Watha that may be suitable for multipurpose conservation and recreational uses. Planning Staff has received a willing seller letter from the property owner. The parcels are undeveloped at this time, although significant acreage of the southern parcel is currently in agricultural use. This site is suitable for a partnership with NC State University, the NC Division of Forest Resources, the NC Cooperative Extension, the US Department of Agriculture, and similar agencies to develop experimental forestry projects. Currently, there are three experimental forests in the state, which serve to represent a specific ecosystem for conducting experiments on stand management and regeneration, restoration of wildlife and plant populations, watershed management, and the effects of pollution, climate change, and timber harvest. An experimental forest at this site may also host educational opportunities and recreational activities, such as hiking trails, camping, hunting, and educational tours and programs, similar to the other experimental forests in the state. The southern parcel may be appropriate for an agriculture experimentation station and community garden. Turnbull Creek Educational State Forest is a model that could be applied to the Cameron Facility.

The development of the recommended Cameron Agriculture and Environmental Education Facility would serve many benefits to the residents of Pender County. The surrounding communities of Watha, Willard, and Penderlea currently lack significant recreational opportunities, and the deficiency in parks and recreation opportunities can be correlated to problems for residents, including health and wellness deficiencies, lower levels of educational attainment, and other poverty related issues contributing to a lower quality of life. The development of this recommended project will also catalyze tourism, educational and economic development opportunities in the area, additionally contributing to a betterment of the quality of life for area residents.



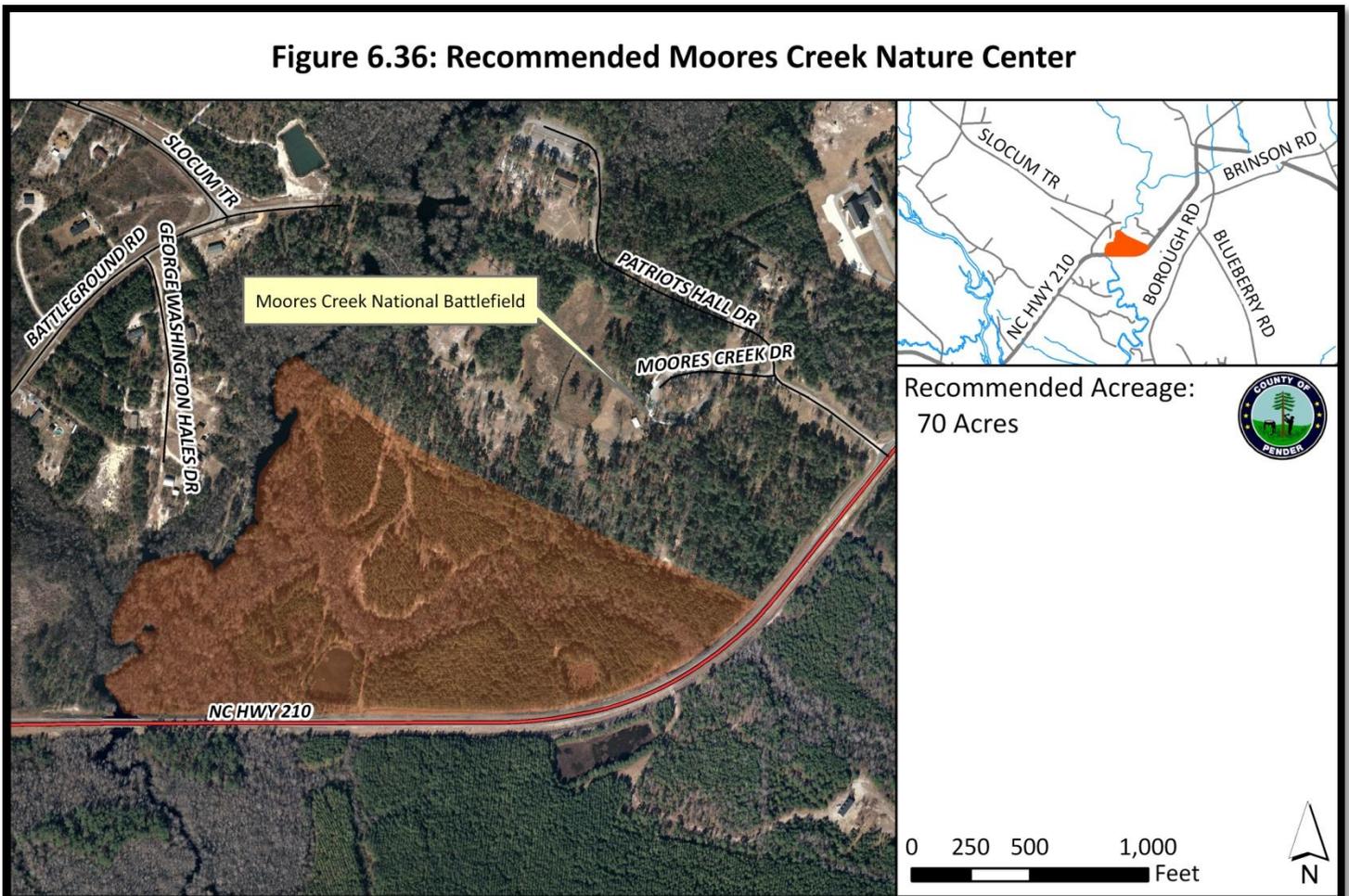
### Moore's Creek Nature Center

In December 2009, Planning Staff met with several interested parties including Pender County Board of Education Staff, Pender County Soil and Water Conservation District Staff, Moore's Creek National Battlefield Staff, and interested citizens to discuss the possibility of developing an ecological-based nature and education center adjacent to Moore's Creek National Battlefield. Since the initial meeting, a non-profit organization has been formed called the Moore's Creek Conservation Alliance to assist with pursuing the development of the Moore's Creek Nature Center.

The Moore's Creek Nature Center would provide a facility for nature-based education and recreation, including use by local schools and universities, the Moore's Creek National Battlefield, Pender County Parks and Recreation, and other organizations for field trips and educational programs. Additionally, the site would host other recreational amenities, potentially including a canoe and kayak launch to Moore's Creek, public fishing areas, picnic areas, a ropes course, and nature/walking trails. This site would be the location of the recommended Moore's Creek Water Access as overviewed later in this section. The recommended site for the Moore's Creek Nature Center is on a portion of a privately-owned parcel identified as Pender County PIN 2265-77-4124-0000. The site consists of approximately 70 acres, situated next to the National Battlefield, and has frontage along both Moore's Creek and NC Highway 210. The site has been used for light timbering purposes, but currently features mature growth and other natural features including a small pond. In the legislation that created Moore's Creek National Battlefield it stipulates that the Battlefield is authorized up to 100 acres, of which currently 76 acres are currently utilized. As such, the additional authorized acreage may be used to acquire a portion of the recommended site and possibly leveraged for grant funding. A willing seller letter has been obtained by Planning Staff from the owner of the subject parcel.

Development and management of this facility would ideally be through a partnership between Pender County Parks and Recreation, Pender County Board of Education, Pender County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Moore's Creek National Battlefield. Like other partnerships, a clear understanding of each entity's role should be understood and clarified in a Memorandum of Agreement or similar document.

**Figure 6.36: Recommended Moore's Creek Nature Center**

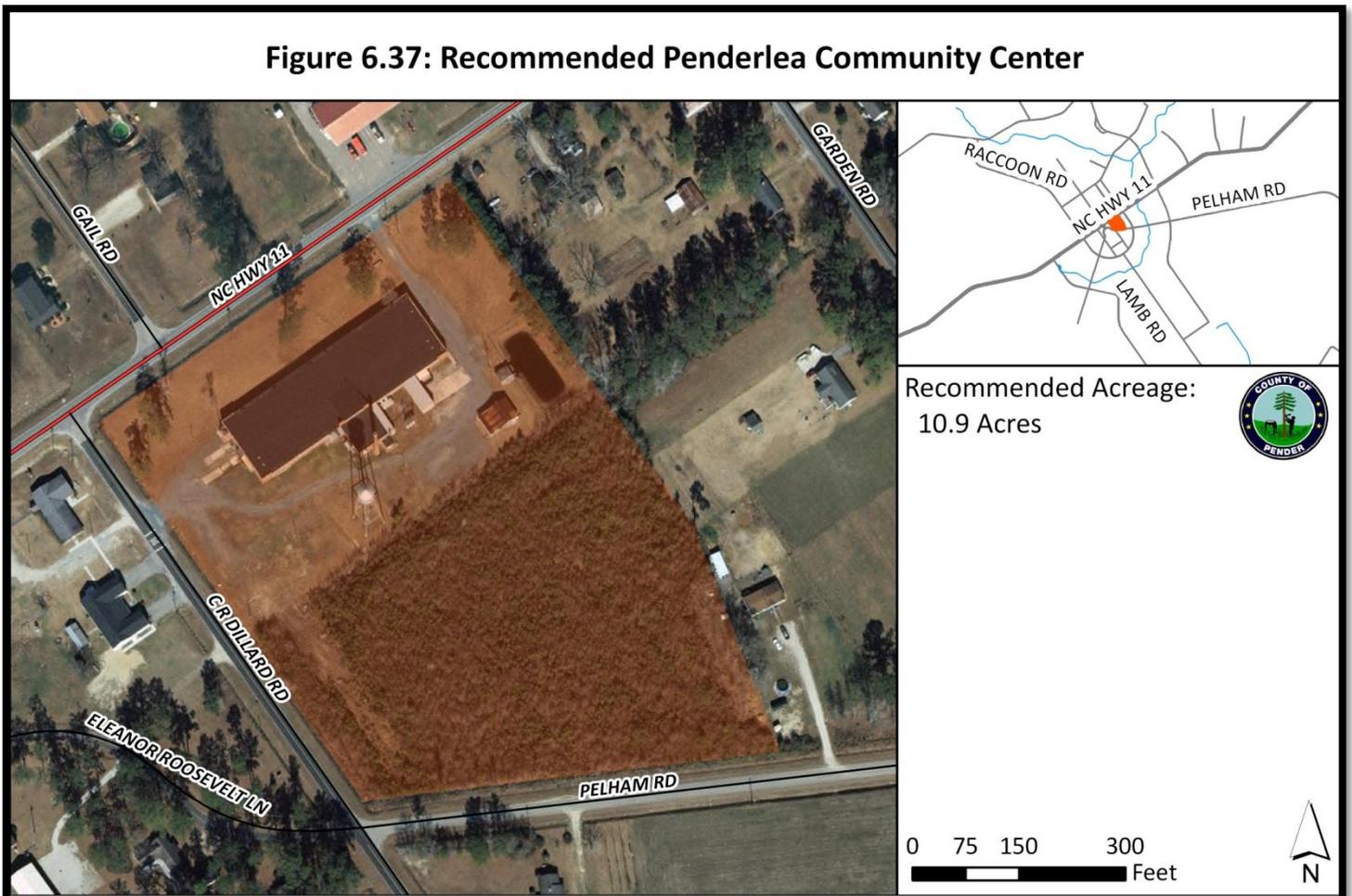


### *Penderlea Community Center*

Penderlea Homestead Farms was the first of 152 homestead projects developed under President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal in 1934, which was created to help bankrupt and unemployed farmers with a means of making a living during the Great Depression. In 1938, Penderlea was selected as one of only five sites in the country to be financed by the Farm Security Administration for the development of a hosiery mill. Since then, the hosiery mill building in Penderlea has changed ownership several times and remained operational until March 2005, when Holt Hosiery decided to shut the plant down, and it has been vacant ever since.

The 33,477 sq. ft. building and the 10.9 acre tract it occupies is a suitable location for a community center and other ventures. This unique building features 1,177 sq. ft. of office space and 32,300 sq. ft. of open workspace that could be transformed and utilized for a variety of uses, including a parks and recreation district office, a Sherriff’s department substation, a fire department substation, classrooms, a library, indoor gymnasium, or for leasing to other organizations and businesses. The facility could also feature outdoor recreational amenities such as playground equipment, walking trails, picnic areas, and storage for parks and recreation equipment and staff and customer parking.

**Figure 6.37: Recommended Penderlea Community Center**



### ***Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area***

During the 2006 North Carolina General Assembly, legislators authorized two new areas into the state parks system, including the Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area in Pender and Onslow Counties. Within Pender County, twelve parcels totaling 1609.27 acres were purchased by the state from the Nature Conservancy for inclusion in the new state natural area.

According to information provided by the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation, Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area has much potential for scientific research, interpretation, and educational activities, but little potential for construction of recreational facilities. This is due to the wet characteristics and ecologically sensitive nature of the majority of the land. Additional land more suitable for facility development may be pursued in the future to enable additional recreational opportunities, specifically picnic shelters and other passive-recreation oriented facilities. The great biodiversity that exists in the Sandy Run Savannahs also provides a great opportunity for education for all ages, and could be utilized for school field trips, university studies, ecotourism, and other environment-based education and recreation.

There is great potential for a partnership between Pender County and the NC Division of Parks and Recreation for recreational development and management in the future at Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area, and this partnership was preliminarily discussed during the creation of this plan. Maple Hill residents were strongly supportive of a simple facility in their community that could support activities such as picnics, family reunions, and family-oriented activities. The recommended bicycle and walking trails would provide community residents areas to safely exercise, which would improve health conditions and lessen the prevalence of diseases and conditions including as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. The Maple Hill community is currently underserved by parks and recreation, and a partnership between Pender County and the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation to develop and manage a facility in the Maple Hill area would fill this deficiency.

### **Recommended Greenways, Trails, and Other Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements**

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities offer communities a variety of benefits, including opportunities for recreation as well as an alternative to motor vehicle transportation by linking together communities, schools, and shopping centers. Pender County is unique in that there are three former rail corridors that transverse the county, two that have been abandoned and one that remains under ownership of the North Carolina Department of Transportation. These former rail corridors would provide unique and safe trails for bicycle and pedestrian use with minimal site work required. Other bicycle and pedestrian improvements and projects are recommended in this plan, including utilizing an existing power line easement for a greenway and improving the existing NC DOT bicycle routes. A comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan is recommended to further scope the recommended projects.

As development ensues along each recommended trail and greenway route, the trail corridor or a close feasible alternative should be reserved for future trail use, and the construction of the trail should occur with any new development project. Existing development along the trail corridors should be evaluated and retrofitted to allow an uninterrupted trail. Planning and funding assistance should also be pursued to enable the development of each recommended project.

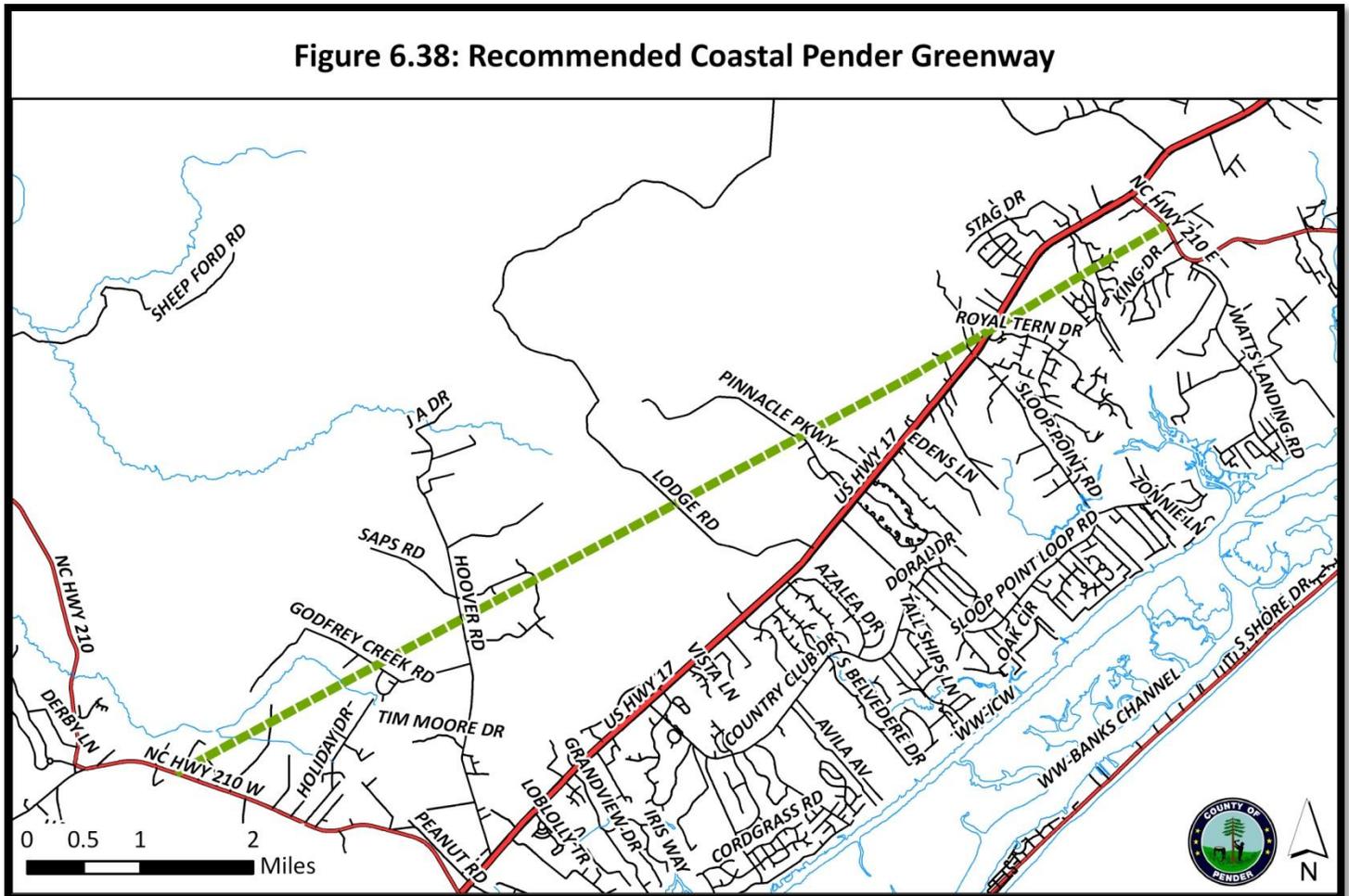
## Coastal Pender Greenway

As previously mentioned, the recommended Coastal Pender Greenway would serve as a valuable connection between the preferred alternative identified in the *Bicycle Facilities Study for the Blue Clay Corridor*, prepared in March 2008 by the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization. As identified in the study, the preferred alternative for Blue Clay Corridor bicycle facility will terminate on Holly Shelter Road, which turns into Island Creek Road when traveling east. The Coastal Pender Greenway would utilize the existing Progress Energy Company's easement from NC Highway 210 near Surf City to NC Highway 210 near Island Creek Drive, although an alternate route would need to be negotiated through or around Castle Bay Golf Course. At the southern end of the Coastal Pender Greenway, trail users would then utilize the existing NC DOT Bicycle Route 3 – Ports of Call, which follows Island Creek Drive to Holly Shelter Road in New Hanover County, and through to Blue Clay Road where users could link with the planned Blue Clay Corridor bicycle facilities.

Use of the Progress Energy Company's easement is limited to uses that do not interfere with maintaining power lines, facilities, and rights-of-way. Detailed planning of the Coastal Pender Greenway will require cooperation with Progress Energy Company staff to ensure the project conforms to Progress Energy Company's Transmission Line Right-of-Way Use Guidelines.

An alternative route may be pursued in conjunction with the Hampstead Highway 17 Bypass, which is an NC DOT project still in the planning stages. The Highway 17 Bypass, also known as NC DOT Transportation Improvement Project R-3300, will bypass the Hampstead area from Caison Drive north of Hampstead and connect to the Wilmington Bypass in New Hanover County. The development of a bicycle/pedestrian lane or trail may be feasible during the construction of the bypass.

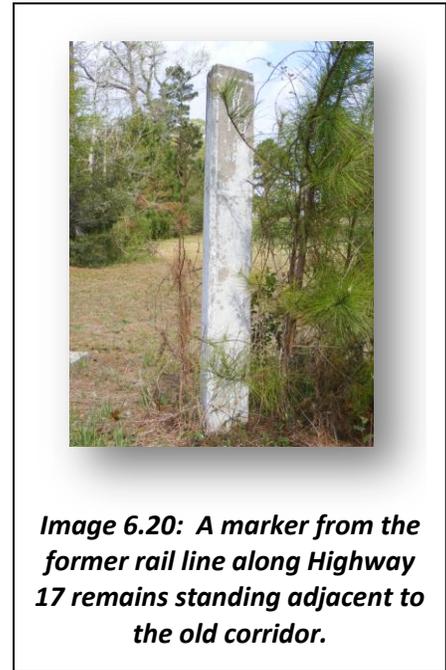
Figure 6.38: Recommended Coastal Pender Greenway



### Coastal Pender Rail-Trail

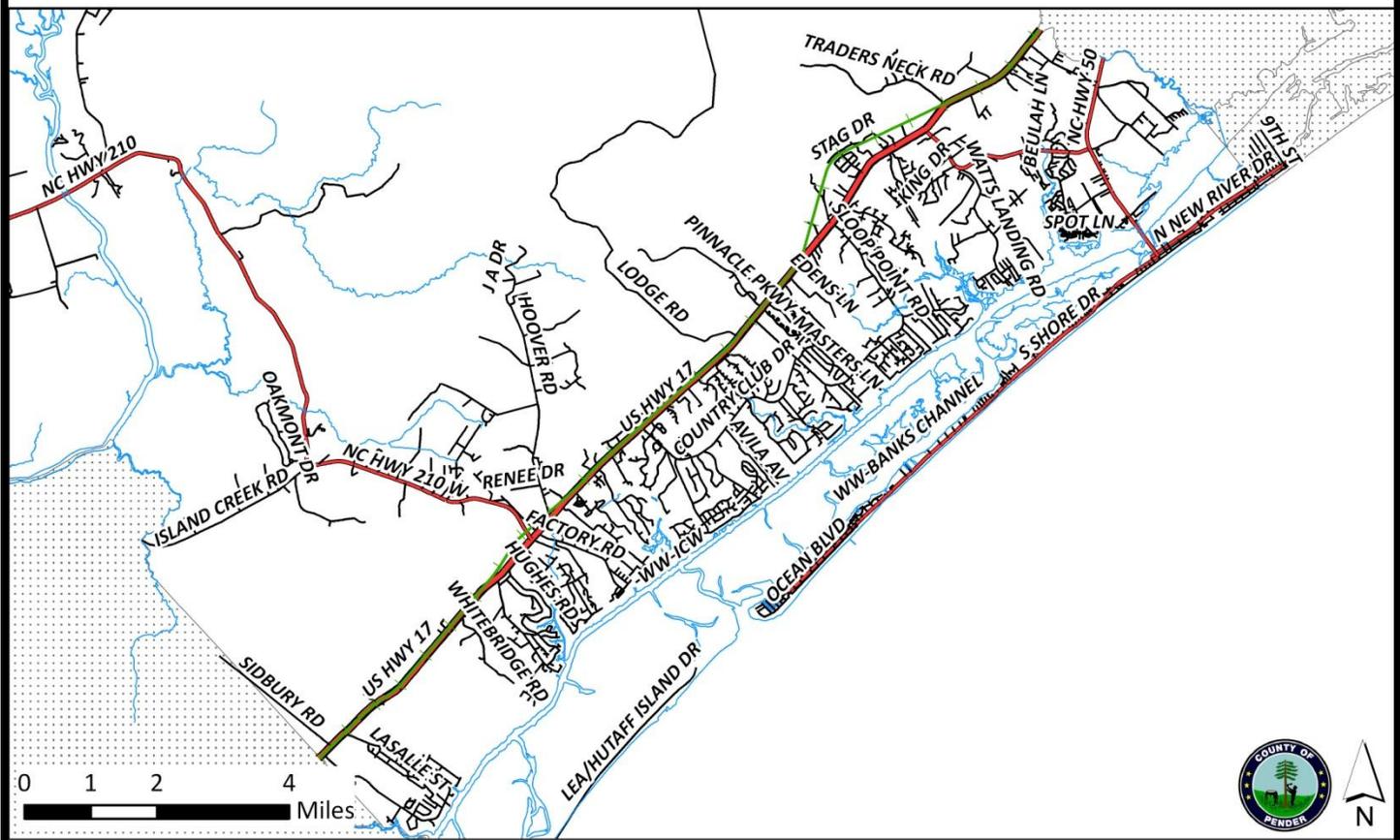
Beginning in the late 1890s, Wilmington once served as an important rail center served by five rail lines, four of them owned by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (ACL), and three of them running through Pender County. Over time, mergers of rail and air lines took place and all of the ACL rail lines running to Wilmington were abandoned and the tracks were removed. Under NC state statutes, the ownership of these former rail corridors have reverted back to the adjacent property owners (with the exception of the former Wilmington to Weldon line running through central Pender County, which is now owned by NC DOT and reserved for future rail use), but the former ballasts mostly remain and would serve as ideal trail corridors.

One former ACL line ran 87 miles from Wilmington through Jacksonville to New Bern, and was opened in 1891 as the Wilmington, Onslow, and East Carolina Railroad. Most of the tracks and cross-ties were removed from this corridor in September and October 1985, and all of the trestles, signals, and highway crossings were gone by December 1986. During 2004 and 2005, US Highway 17 was improved along the Hampstead corridor, utilizing the former rail ballast in certain areas.



The Coastal Pender Rail-Trail would provide a much-needed pedestrian and bicycle route along the busy US Highway 17. This facility would link together residential areas, shopping, schools, libraries, churches, Hampstead Kiwanis Park, and Scotts Hill Community Park. Development along this facility should include a bicycle/pedestrian connection to adjacent properties utilizing the former rail corridor where possible, and subdivisions along this facility should include an easement reserving the use of the former rail corridor or another route where feasible.

**Figure 6.39: Recommended Coastal Pender Rail-Trail**



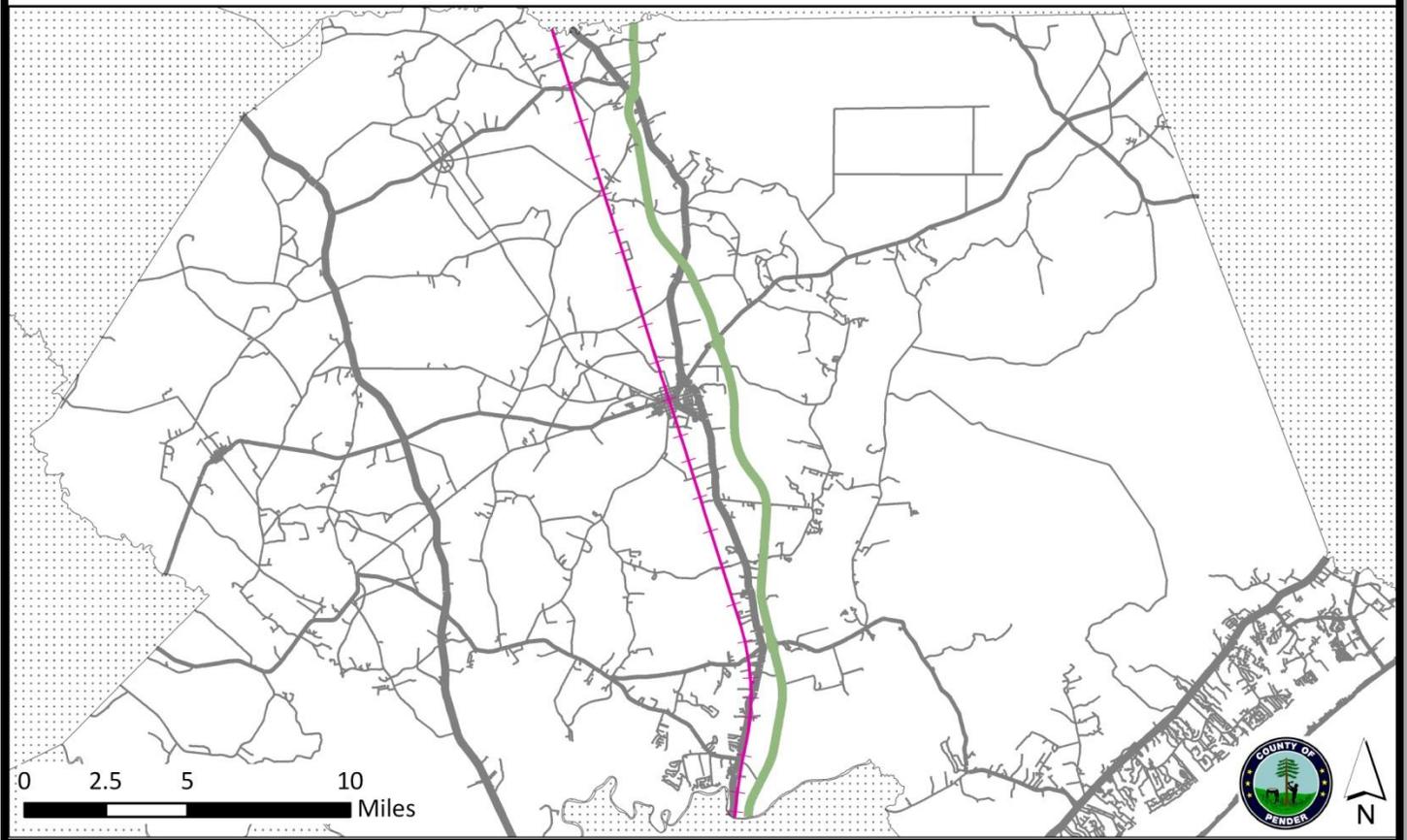
### Central Pender Rail-Trail

Although railbanked by the NC Department of Transportation, the former rail corridor that transverse the central region of Pender County should still be considered for use as a rail-trail if the corridor is not pursued for rail resurrection in the future. Pender County should pursue railbanking the corridor should NC DOT determine that they are not going to pursue the reestablishment of the rail, which is presently being considered and largely contingent on the development of the Southport port project.

The rail corridor, often referred to as the CSX rail line or the Castle Hayne – Wallace line, was identified for rail-trail use in both the 1993 Waterfront Access Plan and the 1998 Recreation and Open Space Plan. This trail would provide a 26-mile bicycle and pedestrian friendly route that would link many communities as well as existing and potential future parks and recreational facilities. The corridor transverse Rocky Point, Ashton, St. Helena, Burgaw, Watha, Willard, and Wallace; north of Wallace, the rail corridor remains active for transportation of freight including grain for animal feeding operations in the region. This rail-trail could also link together Millers Pond Park, Rocky Point Regional Park, Pender Memorial Park, the Cameron Agriculture and Environmental Education Facility, the Willard Outreach Organization, and the Willard Community Park, as well as various schools and businesses along the corridor.

Planning Staff should continue to stay abreast of NC DOT’s decision to reestablish the rail line or abandon the rail corridor and be prepared to take action to obtain corridor usage rights should rail service resurrection prove an infeasible option. If the rail corridor is utilized for rail service in the future, Staff should work with NC DOT and other interest parties to develop a rail-with-trail along the corridor; a rail-with-trail is a trail that runs parallel to the railroad corridor, often separated by a fence and buffer for safety precautions.

**Figure 6.40: Recommended Central Pender Rail-Trail**



### West Pender Rail-Trail

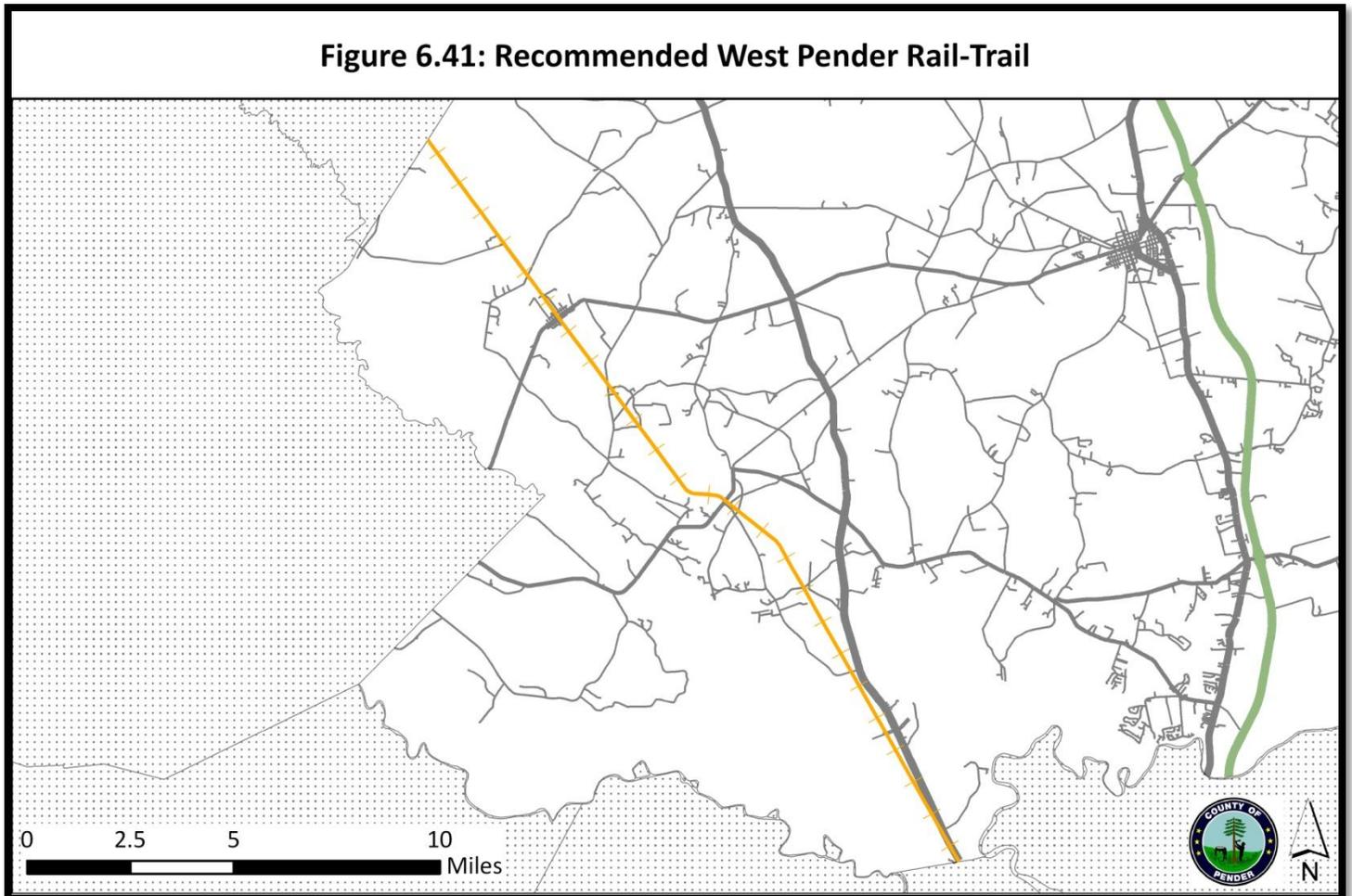
Another former ACL line ran from Wilmington to Mount Airy, with stations in Pender County at Richards, Currie, and Atkinson. Seaboard Coast Line (which formed after the merger of Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Air Line) abandoned the section from Roseboro to Wilmington in the mid-1970s, after which the property reverted back to adjacent land owners as prescribed under North Carolina General Statutes.

Since 2009, Planning Staff has been working with the National Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the North Carolina Rail-Trails organization, the West Pender Rail-Trail Alliance, and others to plan for development and procurement of funding for development and maintenance for the rail-trail. The project has gained support by a multitude of agencies and organizations, including the Wilmington MPO and Cape Fear Council of Governments RPO. Planning Staff has also been working closely with Pender County Department of Public Utilities to ensure that the former rail corridor within the Pender Commerce Park is reserved for trail use, and advocating the development of the trail segment within the commerce park during park infrastructure development.

The first phase of the West Pender Rail-Trail would provide a trail for non-motorized use that would extend approximately 12 miles from Pender – New Hanover boundary to the Moores Creek National Battlefield in Currie. Future phases would extend northwest from the battlefield through Rooks and Atkinson, and beyond into Sampson County. Overall, the West Pender Rail-Trail would comprise a 22-mile segment of a 90-mile trail that would stretch from Wilmington to Fayetteville.

Like the Coastal Pender Rail-Trail, development along this facility should include a bicycle/pedestrian connection to adjacent properties utilizing the former rail corridor where possible, and subdivisions along this facility should include an easement reserving the use of the former rail corridor or another route where feasible.

**Figure 6.41: Recommended West Pender Rail-Trail**



## East Coast Greenway

The East Coast Greenway (ECG) is envisioned by the East Coast Greenway Alliance as a 3000-mile traffic-free trail to connect cities and towns from the Canadian border at Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. The ECG will provide a safe route for exercise, recreation, and transportation along publicly-owned, firm-surface trails. The project involves 15 states plus the District of Columbia, 25 major cities, and many smaller cities, towns, villages, and counties. To date, about 20% of the ECG is on traffic-free paths, including waterfront esplanades, park paths, abandoned railroad corridors, canal tow-paths, and highway corridors. The remainder of the route temporarily follows streets and roads to link these completed trail sections together. While the East Coast Greenway Alliance does not build or fund trails, it promotes the vision for connection local trails and provides strategic assistance for states, counties, and municipalities that develop and manage trails. As of January 2008, 99 individual trails have been designated as part of the East Coast Greenway.

In Pender County, the current ECG Spine Route alignment mimics the NC DOT Bicycle Route 5 along US Highway 421, Blueberry Road, NC Highway 210 West, and Morgan Road (See Figure 6.14 for NC DOT Bicycle Routes in Pender County).

It is recommended that Planning and Parks and Recreation Staff work closely with the East Coast Greenway Alliance to ensure that trail and greenway projects in Pender County are suitable alignments for the ECG, as this project will provide not only recreational and health benefits to county residents, but also tourism and economic development benefits to the county and region.



**Image 6.21: The East Coast Greenway is a project to create a 3000-mile trail from Maine to Florida, and will route directly through Pender County.**

**Image Courtesy of the East Coast Greenway Alliance**

**Other Recommended Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements**

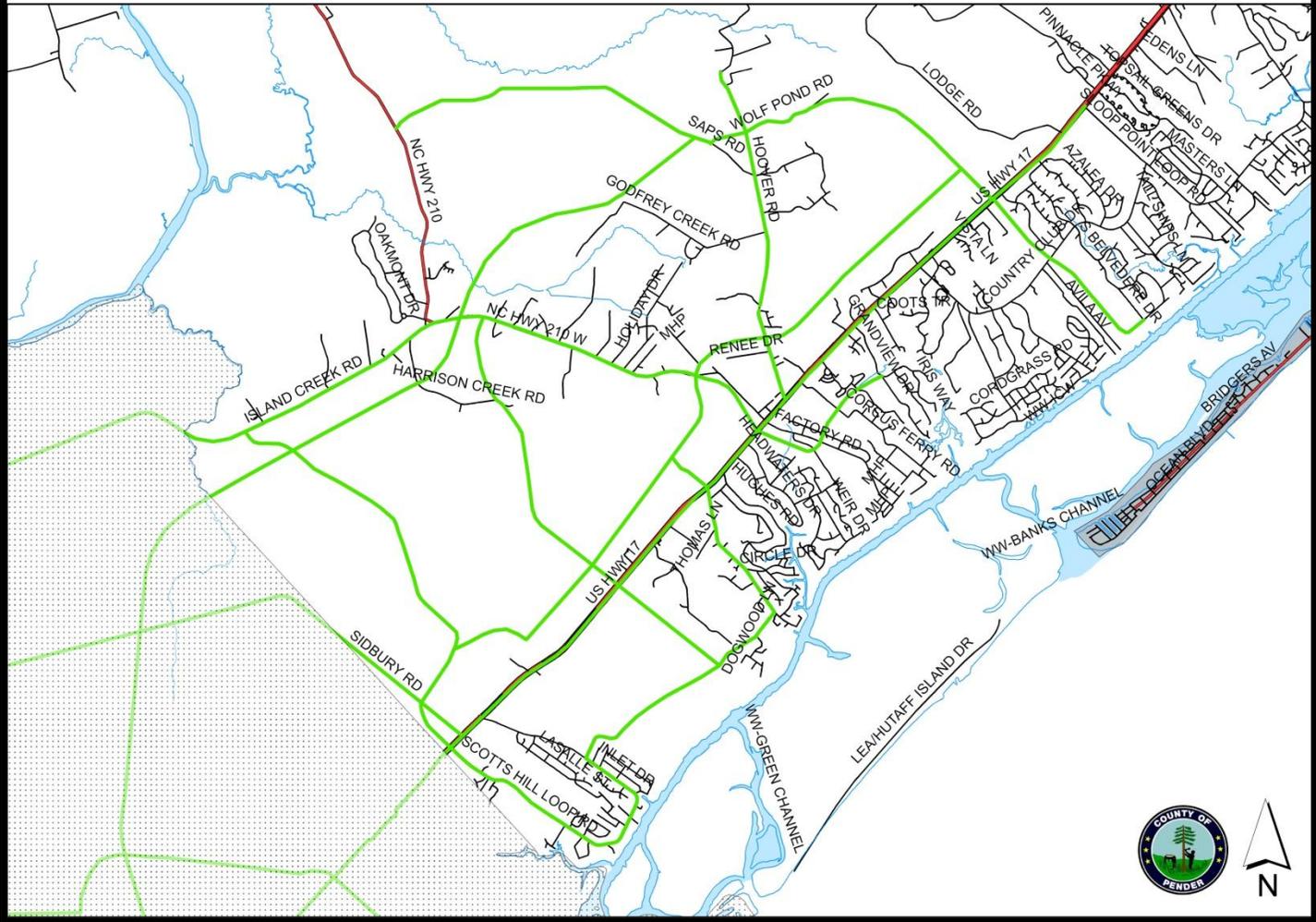
In order to create a safe and efficient network of bicycle and pedestrian trails and greenways, it is recommended that Pender County work with the NC Department of Transportation, the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Cape Fear Council of Governments Rural Planning Organization, as well as the surrounding counties and area municipalities to create a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan. This plan should address improvements to existing DOT bicycle routes, feasible future DOT bicycle routes, planning for Pender County’s segment of the East Coast Greenway, and incorporating existing, planned, and future parks and recreation facilities into future bicycle and pedestrian improvements. This plan should also incorporate the bicycle facilities recommended by the Wilmington MPO in the Coastal Pender Collector Street Plan and the Cape Fear Commutes 2035 Transportation Plan, which are depicted in Figure 6.42.



**Image 6.22: Island Creek Road serves as NC DOT Bicycle Route 3 and an important link between several planned bike and pedestrian improvements, but lacks adequate room for bicyclists and pedestrians.**

Between 1997 and 2004, there were 82 counts of pedestrian crash incidents and 32 counts of bicycle crash incidents in the county, with the majority of both types of incidents occurring in non-municipal areas. Improving existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities, developing new facilities, and education and outreach to bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists may all contribute to reducing crash incidents and creating a safer environment for county residents.

**Figure 6.42: Cape Fear Commutes 2035 Recommended Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements**



## **Recommended Public Water Access Facilities**

Boating, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and other water-dependent recreation were indicated by county residents during the public input period as activities that they currently participate in and wish to see more opportunities for. Pender County is fortunate to have a number of beautiful rivers, creeks, and coastal waters that can provide such opportunities to county residents, as well as visitors to the area. It is recommended that the county work independently and with the NC Wildlife Resources commission to create new facilities and opportunities for public enjoyment of the county's water resources.

### ***Black River Water Access at Still Bluff***

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) currently operates only two facilities at which the public may access the Black River, both of which are outside of Pender County. Hunt's Bluff is located off of Longview Road in Bladen County, and provides parking for 15 vehicles. Amenities are limited to parking and a paved boat ramp; no access for canoe or kayaks, handicap access, or restrooms are featured at this facility. Further upriver in Sampson County, the Ivanhoe boat access area provides an unpaved boat ramp into shallow water, parking for 10 vehicles, but no access for canoes/kayaks or disabled persons or restroom facilities.

It is recommended that Pender County work with WRC to develop a regional public water access area at the junction of the Black River and NC Highway 210 near Still Bluff in conjunction with the Still Bluff Community Park. This site should feature a paved boat access facility, canoe and kayak launch, and handicapped boater access. Shared, ADA-accessible restrooms and parking would serve the park and boat access facility. Public fishing areas should also be considered at this facility such as a boardwalk or stabilized shore areas to allow for residents to fish from the shore.

A water access facility in this vicinity was identified as a recommended project in the *1993 Pender County Waterfront Access Plan* and the *1998 Pender County Recreation and Open Space Plan*. As described in the Recreation and Open Space Plan, the land on the western side of the river at this vicinity appears more suitable for recreation and boating access development. The parcel on the eastern side of the Black River at the NC Highway 210 bridge crossing is currently owned by the Nature Conservancy, and comprises 64 acres of the 3016-acre Black River Preserve. As such, a boating access area in this location would provide residents access to a section of the Black River that remains virtually undisturbed, making it suitable for nature-watching, educational purposes, and recreational enjoyment.

### ***Long Creek Water Access***

Water access to Long Creek was suggested in the *1993 Pender County Waterfront Access Plan*, and it is further suggested that the County continue to pursue this opportunity. This public water access should be limited to small boats such as canoes and kayaks. This facility could be developed in conjunction with the Long Creek Community Park, which is a recommended park on a county-owned parcel that features an existing boardwalk to access Long Creek. Alternatively, a public water access point to Long Creek could be developed in conjunction with NC DOT's planned project to replace the NC Highway 210 bridge over Long Creek; Planning Staff suggested to NC DOT that this recreational facility be developed in conjunction with the bridge replacement project. Like the other recommended water accesses, this recommended project should be further detailed in a blueway master plan for Pender County.

### ***Moore's Creek Water Access***

A public access facility to Moore's Creek was also identified as a recommended project in the *1993 Pender County Waterfront Access Plan*. It is recommended that in conjunction with the Moore's Creek Nature Center, the county also develop a non-motorized boat (canoe and kayak) access facility to Moore's Creek. This facility would provide county residents and visitors access to the pristine and historic Moore's Creek that could be used for recreation, fishing, nature-watching, and educational purposes. This concept is supported by both staff at the Moore's Creek National Battlefield and the members of Moore's Creek Conservation Alliance, and it is recommended that a partnership be pursued to develop and manage this facility in conjunction with the Moore's Creek Nature Center.

### ***Rockfish Creek Water Access***

Public access to Rockfish Creek near the Pender – Duplin County border was also recommended in both the *1993 Waterfront Access Plan* and the *1998 Recreation and Open Space Plan*, and it is recommended that this facility be developed in conjunction with the Willard Community Park. Willard Community Park is recommended for development

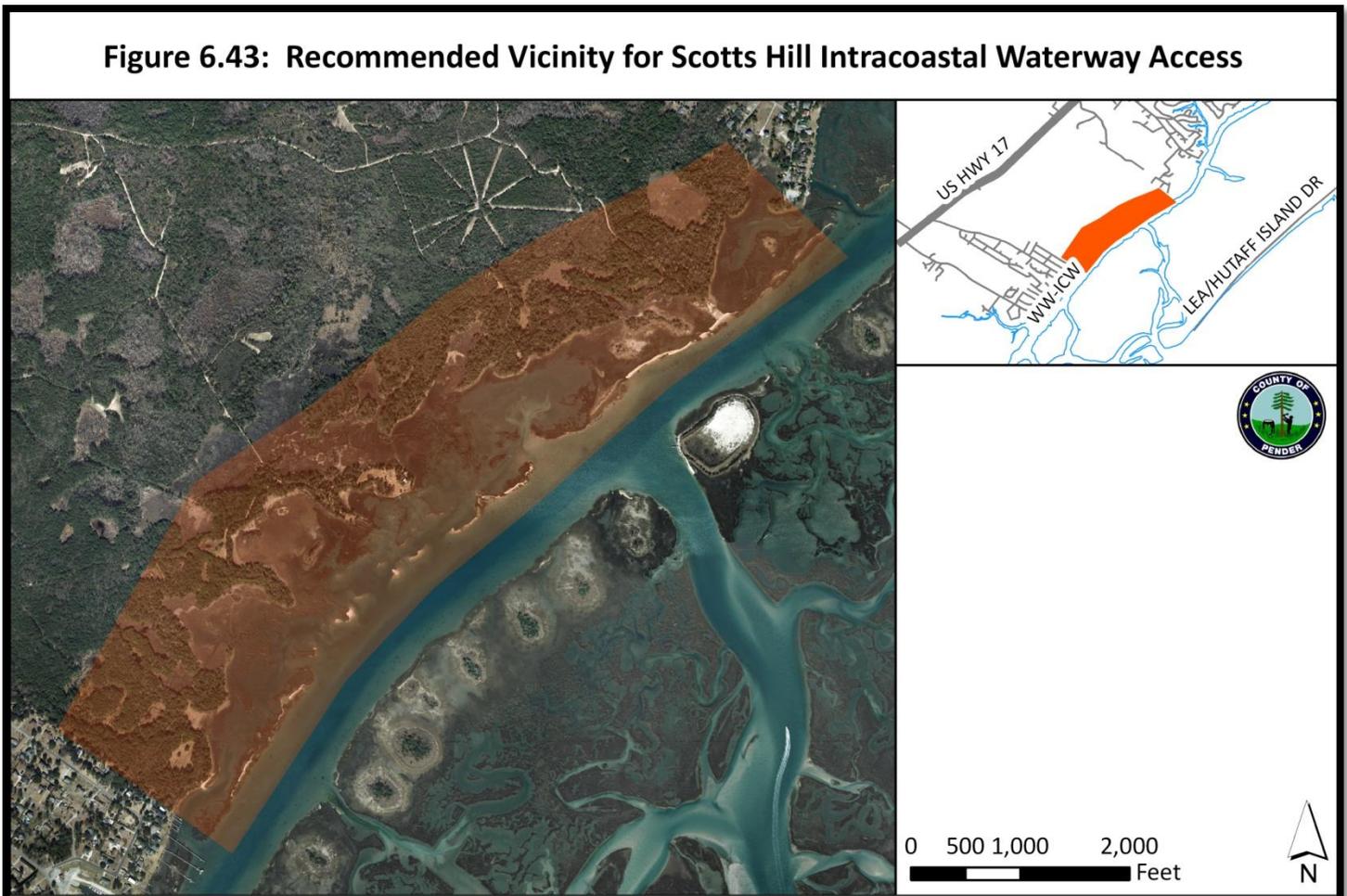
on a 35.49 county-owned parcel that was acquired via a 2000 FEMA program that used federal money to purchase flood-prone parcels from property owners. The parcel recommended for Willard Community Park does not have riparian access to Rockfish Creek, but the county should pursue negotiations with adjacent property owners so that water access from the recommended Willard Community Park parcel is obtained.

The Rockfish Creek Water Access at Willard Community Park would provide non-motorized boat (canoe and kayak) access to Rockfish Creek for water-dependent recreation. Parking for this facility would be shared with the park, as well as ADA-compliant restroom facilities. As mentioned in the recommendation for Willard Community Park, the proximity of the recommended facility may deem appropriate a partnership with Duplin County and the Town of Wallace to develop and manage the facility.

### *Scotts Hill Intracoastal Waterway Access*

During the preparation of this plan, Pender County received a \$2.8 million Waterfront Access and Marine Industry Fund grant to assist with the development of a new, WRC-owned and managed public water access facility in the Hampstead Area. North Carolina's Waterfront Access and Marine Industry (WAMI) Fund was created by the 2007 General Assembly to acquire waterfront properties or develop facilities for the purpose of providing, improving, and/or developing public and commercial waterfront access. This facility will provide the only other access to the Intracoastal Waterway in Pender County besides the facility in Surf City on Topsail Island. It is recommended that the county work with WRC to pursue development of another facility in the Scotts Hill area, which, by the time it is developed, will alleviate the overuse of the existing facilities in Pender County, as well as the access area in Wrightsville Beach. The area identified in Figure 6.43 is ideal for the Scotts Hill facility, as it will provide boating access to the Intracoastal Waterway and also to the Atlantic Ocean via Rich Inlet. A WRC/county-run public dock may also be a suitable amenity, which could provide fee-based pump-out and transient docking slips for boaters traveling up and down the east coast. As North Carolina's coastal areas continue to become more popular places to live and visit, it is imperative that adequate water access areas such as the Scotts Hill Intracoastal Waterway Access be planned and developed to accommodate future needs.

**Figure 6.43: Recommended Vicinity for Scotts Hill Intracoastal Waterway Access**



## Facility Recommendations Summary

The facilities recommended in this plan were derived based on a variety of information. The recommendations were created to plan for new facilities that will provide a variety of recreational opportunities to meet a broad spectrum of users in many areas of the county. The recommended facilities include a total of three park expansions, one mini-park, five neighborhood parks, seven community parks, one regional park, four new county-partnered facilities, a variety of bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and new public water access areas to the Intracoastal Waterway, the Black River, Moores Creek, and Rockfish Creek. Each of these new facilities will help to alleviate the current deficits that exist within the county's parks system, and provide an improved quality of life to the residents and visitors of Pender County.

While some facility recommendations include suitable amenities based on the feedback received through the public input surveys and meetings, it is recommended that more public input be conducted during the planning phases for each new facility. The public input process undertaken during this plan has provided a basis for developing the facility recommendations, and will also serve to provide justification for grants and other funding requests; however, the design of each new facility should be based strongly off of the input received during public project planning and scoping meetings.

On March 15, 2010, the Pender County Board of Commissioners adopted the *2010-2012 Priority Implementation Plan* which sets forth the priorities and strategies for the county for the next two years, and the action necessary to achieve the objectives. In regards to the facilities recommended in this plan, the Priority Implementation Plan states:

*The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will use citizen surveys and other public input methods to develop a ranking or priority system for the projects identified in the 2010 Pender County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan in a manner to ensure equitable development of parks and recreational facilities throughout the county, to be accomplished no later than December 31, 2010.*

As previously mentioned, the recommendations for facility expansion and new facilities in this section are in not in order of project priority. The prioritization of projects will be a result of the ranking and prioritization system developed by Staff and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, which will subsequently be adopted as an amendment or update to this plan. Additionally, the project priorities should be revisited at least annually, as funding, user need and demand, and other conditions will have an effect on the prioritization of the recommended projects.

In addition to developing a prioritization system to rank the recommended projects, the Priority Implementation Plan also states that a scoping plan for each recommended project will be created:

*For each project identified in the plan, the Advisory Board will develop an implementation plan which will include but not be limited to a site plan, ownership, operational and programming opportunities, estimated budget, potential community or other partners, and potential funding/financing resources. This will be accomplished no later than June 30, 2011. This plan will serve as a basis securing resources and grant funds, and partnership development as opportunities for implementation of a project come about.*

As such, the implementation plans for each recommended facility will be created by Staff and should be taken into consideration in future project prioritization.

In summary, the facilities included in this section are non-prioritized recommendations for parks and recreation facility development in Pender County. The recommended facilities will serve to fill deficiencies and service gaps that currently exist in the county's parks system, provide parks and recreation facilities in virtually all areas of the county and to a wide user group, and provide the framework for a functional parks system that is needed to accommodate the forecasted population growth for Pender County.